A Defence of Tauhid by the Repudiation of the Blasphemy That Allah Is Literally In the Sky and That He Literally Ascends the Throne

Being A Learned Discussion About The Meaning Of Tauhid And The Divine Attributes And The Verse Of *Istiwa* And The *Hadith* Of The Slave Girl And Other Such Ambiguous Texts Of The Holy Law

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
والحمد لله رب العالمين
والصلاة والسلام على رسوله الكريم وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين

Hallowed is He, Who created the worlds—from cells to galaxies—out of naught in order to declare the infinite majesty of His transcendence. I seek honor and blessings on the guide of mankind, Muhammad, the illustrious scion of Abraham, the pride of Adam, the last of the prophets, the destroyer of unbelief, idolatry and illusion, the proclaimer of the final word and message from the Lord of Creation, the revealer of miraculous wisdom, the describer of things that have been and things that will come, the warner to mankind of a judgement hard on the mongers of falsehood. There is no power and no ability except in Allah I, and I ask His help to expound with lucidity the meaning of His transcendence, and I ask Him to make this my endeavour pure from all desires except the desire to please Him with the telling of the truth.

Introduction

The loft citadel of Islam is besieged. Everywhere ignorant sectarians, who set themselves up sanctimoniously as the true and learned representatives of the Ahl al-*sunnah* wa 'l-Jamà'ah, or The Main and Orthodox Community[1], are beguiling the faithful and persuading them that in order to be believers they have to follow the outward and literal meaning of allegorical texts (*al-mutashàbihàt* / المتشابهات)[2] even though their outward meanings imply

[1] Orthodoxy in Islam is usually referred to by the epithet, *Ahlu 'l-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamà'ah,* which means *The People of the Sunnah and the Community.* The Prophet ρ greatly emphasized adherence to the main body of Muslims (*al-jamà'ah*). Because orthodoxy refers to the mainstream of a religion it is an appropriate translation for *Ahlu 'l-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamà'ah* if we wish to avoid using the original Arabic term. Orthodoxy stands in contradistinction to heresy and sectarianism. See ahead footnote 36 for more detail.

[2] They are ambiguous because as far as language is concerned there are two or more possible meanings to an ambiguous text, and at the outset it is not known which meaning is implied; for example, the text of the verse in *Surah Fatä*; "Allàh's 'Hand' is above their hands." The word has a literal meaning, which is a physical limb, and it has several figurative meanings. Muäammad ibn Abâ Bakr al-Ràzá (d. after 666 / 1268), a specialist in language and commentary (*tafsár*), mentioned in his authoritative dictionary of Arabic *Mukhtàr al-Ãiäää* that among the figurative meanings of *yad* / يد (hand) are strength, blessing, kindness. Abâ 'l'Abbàs al-Faiyâmá (d. 770 / 1368; Hamàh) mentioned in his dictionary *al-Miãbaä al-Munár* that *yad* / يد (hand) sometimes means power, and sometimes possession, or authority. He said that sometimes it is an idiom which means that a thing is in somebody's disposal, and in the construction *'an yadin* / عن يد it means in subjection and submission. So the question arises: "Is the literal meaning implied or a figurative one?" That is why such texts are called *ambiguous* (*al-muhashàbihàt*). However, any person who has proficiency in Arabic and its modes of speech, and is imbued with the light of the divine uniqueness (*al-tauääd* / التوحيد) immediately understands that the literal meaning, which is the limb of a body, is categorically not implied for Allàh does not have limbs, nor is He com-

an imperfect and therefore impossible meaning for the Creator and contradict the explicit, unambiguous *àyats* of the Qur'an and the basic principle of Allah's unique transcendence known as *al-tauäád*. They invite us to return to Christianity and be like the Christians who say "Our Father who art in Heaven,"[3] for they ask us to belief that that Allah I is physically sitting on the Throne, or hovering somewhere above it in the sky, or that He has the literal attribute they call "high" or "up," all of which means of necessity that He is located in space, and that He is describable by direction, and has a limit in the direction of the Throne, and that He moves about in the heavens. Not only are these concomitants (things which necessary follow from another statement or precept) things they freely admit, but things that they insist upon. Indeed, with them it has become the test of belief to ask the question: "Where is Allah?" Those who answer that He is in the sky, or on the Throne, they regard as believers; whereas, those who answer otherwise they declare to be unbelievers. However, Allah I, high and holy is He, is free of the false things that they impute to Him, and their blasphemies do not impair His incomparable majesty. Furthermore, they insist that He literally has two hands with which He extends and clasps, and two eyes with which He sees. The blasphemous implication of their assertions is that He, exalted is He, is a com-

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plied for Allàh does not have limbs, nor is He compounded, nor does He have a body nor any of the attributes of bodies which are originated phenomena. That is known both by reason and by the definitive texts of the Qur'àn and the Sunnah like Allàh's word: "Nothing is like Him and He is the One Who hears [all things that can be heard without any ear – al-Nasafá], the One Who sees [all things that can be seen without any eye – al-Nasafá]." Since the literal meaning is precluded by reason and the *Sharí'ah,* we are compelled to under-stand an idiomatic meaning (*majàz* / مجاز) which we either commend to Allàh, or determine according to the rules of language and with the transcendent majesty of Allàh in view. In fact, there is a basic rule of in the science of commentary that those verses which are ambiguous (*al-muhashàbihàt*) in that they permit more than one interpretation, have to be referred to those verses which are conclusive and unequivocal (*al-muäkamah*) in that they only have one meaning. If we do not do this, we will be faced with all kinds of glaring contradictions. The words "Allàh's 'Hand' is above their hands" belong to the class of ambiguous verses, while the words "nothing is like Him," and "your Lord, the Lord of Glory, transcends all that they ascribe to Him," and the words "Is He who creates like Him who does not create?" belong to the class of conclusive, unequivocal verses (*al-muäkamah*). The first has to be interpreted in a way which is consonant with the second; otherwise, we have a contradiction for so many of Allàhs creatures have hands. In this context when we say *interpret*, we do not usually mean giving the word or phrase a new meaning; rather, it is usually only a question of choosing another meaning of the word or phrase. Al-Nasafá says that it means that those who took oath from Prophet ρ by taking his hand, it was as if they took oath from Allah Himself. Al-Suyáțá says it means that Allàh was cognizant of their oath, and that He will redeem them for taking it. Ibn Juzai al-Kilbá says it is an imaginary picture (*takhyál wa tamthál* / تخييل و تمثيل) the implication of which is that the hand of the Prophet ρ which is over the hands of those who took oath from him is the *Hand* of Allàh in meaning, not literally, and what that means is that by taking oath from the Prophet ρ it were as if they were taking oath from Allàh.

[3] For those who don't know much about Christianity, I inform you that these words are the first words of the central prayer of Christianity: The Lord's Prayer.

pounded and has limbs and parts like other bodies. In their ignorance they do not realize that what has parts is in need of one to provide him with those parts and arrange them, and whatever has the slightest need of another could not bring even the wing of a fly out of nonexistence. Similarly, they insist that He physically laughs and literally speaks, and so on. In short, they are calling the people of Islam to the anthropomorphism of the Christians and the Jews. They have prevailed on those who are new to Islam, and those Muslims who have no Islamic education, or who are only half-educated, and on those who wish at all costs to belong to their clique and hew to the party line in order to have a share in petrol dollars to renounce the pristine transcendent perspective of Islam in exchange for an unholy counterfeit. Indeed, it would seem that the last of the five great trials (*fitan*) which the Prophet ρ promised this nation (*ummah*)[4] has descended on it--the trial that he υ said "would toss about like the tossing of the sea,"[5] for it has rocked the very Citadel of Transcendence on Earth. Shaikh al-Islam Ibn Äajr stated that in this last trial the people will be mindless like animals, and he adduced to this effect the *hadith* of the Companion Abâ Mâsà that that trial "will take away the minds of most of the people of that time." Then he referred to the *hadith* reported by an early compiler of *hadith* (*muäaddith*) Abâ Bakr Ibn Abi Shaibah (d. 235 / 849): "Trial [which is in the form of punishment or pogrom] can not harm you as long as you know your religion; the real trial is that wherein you can not distinguish between truth and falsehood (*al-bàåil*)." Abâ Dàwâd, Ibn Hibbàn, al-Åabaràná, 'Abd al-Razzàq and others reported that Abâ Hurairah reported that the Prophet said: "Then there will be a trial (*fitnah*) that is deaf, dumb and blind. Whoever, looks for it, it will look for him. Insisting with the tongue during it will be like the blow of the sword [in fighting against that *fitnah*]."[6] "Abd al-Ra 'âf al-Munàwá said, in his commentary of *al-Jàmi' 'l-Ãaghir* of al-Suyâtá, said that another version of the report has "harder than the sword." He said that the people will be blind to it and they will not listen to the truth nor

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[4] I am referring to a *hadith* that Shaikh al-Islam Ibn Äajr (d. 852 / 1449; Cairo) mentioned in his *Fatä al-Bàrá* (Beirut, Dàr al-Fikr, n.d.), p. 49; vol. 13, saying that it was transmitted by the famous compiler of *hadith* (*muäaddith*) Ibn Abá Shaibah (d. 235/849): "Allàh has prepared five trials for this nation (*ummah*)…" The *hadith* mentioned four of them then it said: "Then will come a trial which will toss about [literally, make waves–Arabic: *tamâj* / تموج] like the tossing of the sea." Ibn Äajr supposes that what this *hadith* refers to is what prompted the Prince of the Muäaddithân, Imam al-Bukhàrá (d. 256 / 870; Khartank, Samarkand) to name a section in his chapter on the great trials (*Kitàb al-Fitan*): "The Trial Which Will Toss Like the Tossing of the Sea" (*Bàb al-Fitnah Alltá Tamâj ka Mauj al-Baär* / باب الفتنة التي تموج كموج البحر).

[5] Imam al-Bukhàrá introduced a section in his chapter *Kitàb al-Fitan* which he called *Bàb al-Fitnah Alltá Tamâj ka Mauj al-Baär* / باب الفتنة التي تموج كموج البحر . See Ibn Äajr, *Fatä al-Bàrá*, p. 47; vol. 13.

[6] سنن أبي داود, باب في كف اللسان, حديث رقم: 4264 حدثنا عبد الملك بن شعيب بن الليث حدثني بن وهب حدثني الليث عن يحيى بن سعيد قال قال خالد بن أبي عمران عن عبد الرحمن بن البيلماني عن عبد الرحمن بن هرمز عن أبي هريرة أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: ستكون فتنة صماء بكماء عمياء من أشرف لها استشرفت له وإشراف اللسان فيها كوقوع السيف.

speak the truth. Ibn Rislàn in commenting on this *hadith* mentioned a couple of interpretations among which he said: “nobody will be able to enjoin what is right during it, nor to forbid what is wrong, rather, if he speaks the people will ask if there was nobody but him to speak.” It is not actually the *fitnah* that is deaf, dumb and blind but rather the people; the expression is a figure of speech like *nahàru ãà'imun;* that is, literally “his day is fasting” but actually “he fasts during the day.” The people are blind to the *fitnah* that surrounds them, deaf to those who warn them about it and silent instead of speaking out against it. The heresy of anthropomorphism is such a trial. Anybody that imagines, or that can be persuaded that God has two eyes with which He sees and that He physically sits on the Throne or hovers above it is certainly mindless; rather, he is godless, for God is one he does not know.

The devious hustle of the apostles of anthropomorphism recalls the words of the Prophet ρ: “[There will come forth] preachers (*du'àt*) [who stand] at the doors of Hell. Whoever heeds them, they will cast them into it.”[7] When Äudhaifah τ, who reported the *hadith*, asked the Prophet ρ to describe those preachers, he said: “They are people of our skin, and they speak our tongue.” Shaikh al-Islam Ibn Äajr remarked that this is an indication that those preachers will be from the Arabs,[8] while he quoted [Abâ 'l-Äasan] al-Qàbisá (d. 403 / 1012; Qairawàn) as saying that since a thing's skin is its outer surface, it means that outwardly they belong to our relgion, but inwardly they belong to a different one. The danger of false preachers can not be overerpha-sized. Imàm Aämad reported that the Prophet ρ said: “More than the Antichrist (al-Dajjàl), I fear for you

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[7] The *hadith* was reported by al-Bukhàrá in *Kitàb al-Fitan* in the section titled: *Kaifa al-Amr Idh Lam Yakun al-Jamà'ah*, and by Imam Muslim (d. 261 / 875; Samarkand) in *Kitàb al-Imàràh* in the section titled: *Wujâb Mulàzamah Jamà'at al-Muslimán 'inda Æuhâr al-Fitan*. See Ibn Äajr, *Fatä al-Bàrá*, (Beirut, Dàr al-Fikr, n.d.), p. 35; vol. 13; and al-Nawawá, *Sharä Ãaäää Muslim* (Beirut, Dàr al-Fikr, n.d.), p. 236; vol. 12; respectively.Imam Sharaf al-Dán al-Nawawá (d. 676 / 1277; Nawà, Syria), who wrote a voluminous and much-celebrated commentary on *Ãaäää Muslim,* said that the *'ulamà'* (Muslim scholars of the religious sciences) interpret those “preachers at the doors of Hell” to be those leaders who invite to deviation (*bid'ah*) or misguidance (*çalàl*) like the *Khawàrij* [an early Islamic sect the first of whom revolted against the Caliph 'Alá; or a continuous phenomena of rejection of authority and orthodoxy––see ahead **Cross-reference**] and the *Qaràmatah* [an ultra-fanatic sect of Shi'ah who perpetrated much atrocity and sacrilege including the stealing of the black stone from the Holy Ka'bah and the wanton slaughter of pilgrims in Makkah in the month of Hajj in the year 317 hegira / January 930] and the perpetrators of the *Miänah* [an inquisition-like era at the beginning of the second century of hegira in which the sect of *al-Mu'tazilah* **Cross-reference** after bringing the Caliphs to their persuasion set about punishing and killing any who denied their sectarian views]. Imam al-Nawawá stated that the *hadith* indicates the obligation to follow the main body of Muslims and their imam [if they have one]. See his *Sharä Ãaäää Muslim,* p. 237; vol. 12.

[8] Ibn Äajr supported his opinion by observing that the skin of the Arabs is distinctively brown (*sumarah*).

other than the Anitchrist." Somebody asked: "What is that?" He replied: "Leaders (*a'immah*) who misguide."[9]

Therefore, you should be steadfast in maintaining the transcendent uniqueness (*al-tauhád*) of Allah Ψ, the Incomparable Lord of Power and Glory, recognizing that His transcendence requires that He is neither a body, nor definable by limits, nor describable by direction, nor com-pounded of parts, nor divisible, nor does He share with bodies any physical characteristic. He, the Creator of time and space; does not occupy space, and time does not affect Him. He is beyond all change, and all comprehension. He has not form, nor appearance; whatever we imagine Him Ι, the Inscrutable Lord of Majesty, to be, He is other than that.

In what follows, I will, with the help of Allah Ι, discuss the rational basis of *tauääd* and its basis in the *sharáʻah* and discuss how we are bound to treat those ambiguous texts called *mutashàbihàt,* which have an outward meaning which offends the essential principle of *tauääd,* namely transcendence (*tanzáh*), and a metaphorical, or figurative, meaning which conforms with it.

[9] The *muäaddith* Murtuçà al-Zabádá (d. 1205 / 1790; Cairo) mentioned in his commentary on *Iäyà' 'Ulâm al-Dán* that this *hadith* was reported by Imam Aämad (d. 241 h. / 855; Baghdàd) in his *al-Musnad* with a chain of narration in which figures Ibn Luhaiʻah, whom al-'Iràqá said is a figure of controversy (*mukhtalif fáhá*). Al-Zabádá mentioned several corroborating *hadith* (*shāwàhid*) among them a long *hadith* of the Companion Jubair ibn Nufair τ concerning the Antichrist, which was reported by Imam Muslim and the four imams of the*Sunans,* in which the Prophet ρ said: "Other than the Antichrist has made me afraid for you." He said that Imam Aämad reported [presumably also in his *al-Musnad*] that 'Umar τ asked the Companion Kaʻb τ: "What is it that you fear most for the nation (*ummah*) of Muäammad?" He replied: "Leaders (*a'immah*) who misguide." 'Umar confirmed: "You are saying the truth. The Messenger of Allàh υ taught me that." See *Itääf Sàdat al-Muttaqán bá Sharä Iäyà' 'Ulâm al-Dán* (Beirut, Dàr Iäyà' al-Turàth al-'Arabá), pp.350-351; vol. 1.

The Definition of Transcendence

Transcendence comes from a Latin root which means *to rise beyond.* In relation to the Allah I it refers to the principle that He is beyond all materiality, beyond comparison, beyond change, beyond imagination, that is to say that he is without materiality, without comparison, without change and unimaginable. It does not imply that He is beyond in the physical sense of being beyond the universe in a way which requires Him to physically surround it, or to be contiguous with it, or even separate from it since that necessarily implies that He has a limit and therefore a body as will be discussed in more detail a little later. in the section: "Ibn al-Jauzá the Hanbali Denounces Those Hanbalis Who Insist That Allah Y is Separate from His Creation," (page 50). What *beyondness* means was lucidly explained by Imam Abâ Äàmid al-Ghazàlá (d. 505 h. / 1111; Tâs, Iran) in a formula that has become proverbial: "Neither is He in this world, nor outside it; neither is He contiguous with the world nor separate from it."[10] Transcendence (*tanzáh*) is the essence of the Islamic principle of the divine uniqueness (*al-tauäád* / التوحيد), which the celebrated authority of Islamic belief, Imàm al-Åaääàwá (d. 321 / 923; Cairo), described at the opening of his famous tract on belief known popularly as *al-'Aqádah al-Åaääàwáyah*:

> قال الإمام وبه قال الإمامان المذكوران رحمهما الله تعالى: نقول في توحيد الله تعالى معتقدين بتوفيق الله تعالى إن الله تعالى واحد لا شريك له, ولا شيء مثله, ولا شيء يعجزه, ولا إله غيره, قديم بلا ابتداء دائم بلا انتهاء, لا يفنى ولا يبيد ولا يكون إلا ما يريد, لا تبلغه الأوهام ولا تدركه الأفهام, ولا تشبهه الأنام, حي لا يموت, قيوم لا ينام, خالق بلا حاجة, رازق لهم بلا مؤنة, مميت بلا مخافة, باعث بلا مشقة, ما زال بصفاته قديما قبل خلقه لم يزدد بكونهم شيئا لم يكن قبلهم من صفاته وكما كان بصفاته أزليا كذلك لا يزال عليها أبديا.[11]

> The Imàm [Abâ Äanáfah (d. 150 / 767; Baghdad)] said, as did the two above-mentioned *imams* [Abâ Yâsaf (d. 182 / 798; Baghdad) and Muäammad (d. 189 / 804; Ray), the two foremost disciples of Abâ Äanáfah], may Allah show them mercy: "Concerning the uniqueness (*tauäád* / التوحيد) of Allah, exalted is He, we say and believe by enabling-ability from Allah, exalted is He, that Allah is one; He has no partner and nothing is like Him, and nothing is too difficult for Him [to do]. There is no god other than He. He is eternal (*qadám* / قديم) without beginning, and everlasting (*dà'im* / دائم) without end. He does not cease to be, nor does He perish. Nothing can be, except what He wills. No one can imagine Him, nor understand Him. Man does not resemble Him. He lives and does not die. He sustains [all things], and does

[10] The statement of Imam al-Ghazàlá is quoted from his *al-Iqiãàd fá 'l-I'tiqàd* (Cairo, Maktabah al-Subai'á, 1390 h.), p. 28.

[11] من متن شرح العقيدة الطحاوية المسماة ب بيان عقيدة أهل السنة والجماعة, دار الفكر, دمشق, الطبعة الثانية, 1412هـ/1992م، ص 47-56.

> not sleep. He is the Creator who is beyond all need. He is the Provider who Himself has no need for provision. He puts to death without any fear [of reprisal]. He is the Resurrector, [and He resurrects] without any effort. His attributes were eternal (*qadám*) [that is, un-originated and without any beginning] before He created [the universe]. After the existence of things, His attributes did not increase [or change] beyond what they were before the existence of those things. As He was with His attributes in pre-eternity, so He will not cease to be forevermore (*Kamà kàna bá ãifàtihá azaláyan, ka dhàlika là yazàlu abadáyan. /* كما كان بصفاته أزليا كذلك لا يزال أبديا).[12]

(NB: Check for gradual introduction of terms that you do not use terms that you have not yet defined; and also that you don't define them more than once. For example *anthropomorphism.*)

We will explain this passage in detail, but first let us clarify some of our terms. The term *tauäád /* توحيد is a vital term in the vocabulary of Islam. Let us consider the definition of *tauäád* advanced by a high and scrupulous authority of the *shará'ah* (the code of Islam), Ibn Äajr al-'Asqalàná (d. 852 hegira / 1449; Cairo)[13]:

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[12] Quoted from 'Abd al-Ghaná al-Ghunaimá , *Sharä al-'Aqádah al-Åàhawáyah* (Damascus: Dàr al-Fikr, 2nd ed., 1992), pp. 47-56.

[13] Shaikh al-Islam Ibn Äajr al-'Asqalàná was a supreme authority in the sciences of *hadith* transmission, criticism, and interpretation; the science of biography of *hadith* narrators, and the appraisal and criticism of those narrators. His erudition in those sciences was so great, his opinion so astute, and his discussions so thoroughly verified that he earned the epithet *Prince of the Believers in Hadith* (*Amár al-Mu'minán fi 'l-Hadith*) as the *muäaddith* and historian Muäammad ibn 'Alàn (d. 1057 / 1647) mentioned in the introduction to his commentary on *al-Adhkàr* of *al-Nawawá* **(REFERENCE)** , and as did Muäammad Äabáb al-Shinqátá (d. 1363 / 1944; Cairo), the author of *Kauthar al-Ma'àná al-Daràrá fá Kashf Khabàyà Ãaäää al-Bukhàrá*, a commentary of *al-Bukhàrá* in fourteen volumes .**(REFERENCE)** Indeed, the later *muäaddithân* often refer to him simply as the Äàfiæ (*al-Åàfiæ*). Although the term *hàfiæ* is a usual epithet for a consummate *muäaddith*, and many *ulamà'* are referred to by that title, when the *ulamà'* say *the* Äàfiæ, everybody knows that Ibn Äajr is meant. As Ibn Äajr himself indicated in his *al-Majma' al-Mu'assas lá 'l-Mu'jam al-Mufahhris*, he studied 1498 books with more 730 shaikhs. His student Shams al-Dán al-Sakhàwá (d. 902 / 1497; Medina) stated in his work of biography of the *'ulamà'*, *al-Çau al-Làmi'*, the greatest *'ulamà'* of the times agreed that they had not seen the likes of Ibn Äajr on account of his vast erudition, his astuteness, and accuracy. He has a reputation for being thoroughgoing and scrupulous in his researches, and that is why the *'ulamà'* often also refer to him as *al-Muäaqqiq.* The word refers to a researcher who establishes everything he says with thorough documentation and proof, for Ibn Äajr, it also became a proper name. Al-Sakhàwá, who is himself a high-ranking *muäaddith*, said that Ibn Äajr mastered all the sciences of the *shará'ah* (the entire code of law of Islam); indeed, the mere names of some fifteen of the sciences that he knew were not even known to the generality of *'ulamà'*. Keep in mind that he lived in a period in which learning flourished. Al-Sakhàwá says that after his long years of study and travel for the sake of study, he gave himself up mostly to the *hadith* sciences both teaching and writing, and most of the one hundred and fifty books which he authored are restricted to that field. In his lifetime his books were sought by kings from the ends of the earth, and they paid huge sums of money to obtain them in order to satisfy the exigent requests of their own *'ulamà'*. To this day,

وأما أهل السنة, ففسّروا التوحيد بنفي التشبية والتعطيل, ومن ثمّ قال الجنيد فيما حكاه أبوا القاسم القشيرى, التوحيد إفراد القديم عن المحدث, وقال أبو القاسم التميمى في كتاب الحجة: التوحيد مصدر وحّد يوحّد, ومعنى وحدّت الله اعتقدته منفردا بذاته وصفاته لا نظير له ولا شبيه, وقيل معنى وحّدته علمته واحدا, وقيل سلبت عنه الكيفية والكمية, فهو واحد في ذاته لا انقسام له, وفي صفاته لا شبيه له في إلهيته وملكه وتدبيره لا شريك له ولا رب سواه ولا خالق غيره, وقال ابن بطال تضمنت ترجمة الباب أن الله ليس بجسم مركب لأن الجسم من أشياء مؤلفة وذلك يرد على الجهمية في زعمهم أنه جسم, كذا وجدت فيه ولعله أراد أن يقول المشبهة, وأما الجهمية فلم يختلف أحد ممن صنّف في المقالات أنهم ينفون الصفات حتى نسبوا إلى التعطيل, وثبت عن أبي حنيفة أنه قال: بالغ جهم في نفي التشبيه حتى قال إن الله ليس بشيء, وقال الكرماني الجهمية فرقة من المبتدعة ينسبون إلى جهم بن صفوان مقدم الطائفة القائلة أن لا قدرة للعبد أصلا, وهم الجبرية بفتح الجيم وسكون الموحدة, ومات مقتولا في زمن هشام بن عبد الملك انتهى. وليس الذى أنكروه على الجهمية مذهب الجبر خاصة, وإنما الذى أطبق السلف على ذمهم بسببه إنكار الصفات.[14]

The Main and Orthodox community [that is to say, their *‘ulamà’* (Muslim religious scholars)] explained *tauäád* / توحيد (the uniqueness of God), to be the repudiation of the notion that Allah has any attribute which resembles the attributes of created things [which notion in Arabic is called *tashbáh* / تشبيه], and of the notion that He does not possess those transcendent attributes which His perfection and majesty require [which notion in Arabic is called *ta‘tál* / تعطيل[15]]. That is why al-Junaid [d. 92 h. / 297; Baghdàd] in a report transmitted by [Abâ ’l-Qàsim] al-Qushairá [d. 465 / 1072; Niãàbâr] [in his *al-Risàlah*] said: “*Al-Tauäád* consists in maintaining the uniqueness of the un-originated [that is, the eternal, or more specifically the preeternal—Arabic: *qadám*] with respect to the originated [*äàdith* / حادث].” Abâ Qàsim al-Tamámá (d. 535 / 1141; Baghdàd)[16] said in his book *al-Äujjah* [*fá Bayàn al-Maäajjah*]:

> *Al-Tauäád* is the verbal noun [Arabic—*maãdar*] from which the past verb *waääada* / وحد , and the present verb *yuwaääidu* / يوحد are derived. The meaning of the sentence: *Waääattu Allah* / وحدت الله; is: *I‘taqattu Allah munfaridan* / اعتقدت الله منفردا [that is, I declared (or

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his books in the *hadith* sciences are texts of the highest authority, and his commentary on the *Ãaääá al-Bukhàrá* is perhaps the most famous and highly regarded commentary on the *Ãaääá* which exists. Much to the consternation, of the pseudo-Salafis, who pretend to be the people of *hadith,* Ibn Äajr, was an unreserved Asharite.

[14] فتح البارئ لابن حجر, دار الفكر بتحقيق عبد العزيز بن باز, ج 13, ص 344-345.

[15] An example of *ta‘tál* is the heretical idea espoused by the sect called *Mu‘tazilah* that Allàh does not have knowledge of particulars, or that He is not qualified by life, will and so on although they admit that He is knowledgeable, alive, and willing.

[16] He is Qiwàm al-Sunnah, Ismà’ál ibn Muäammad ibn al-Façl, the author of numerous works including a commentary of the *Ãaääá* of al-Bukhàrá, a commentary of the *Ãaääá* of Muslim, and six works of commentary on the Qur‘àn, the largest being a work of thirty large volumes.

maintained) categorically that Allah is unique] in His essence (*dhàt* / ذات), and that in respect of His attributes (*ãifàt* / صفات), He has no likeness, nor resemblance. However, it has also been said that it means: "I acknowledge that He is one", and likewise, that it means: "I deny Him all quality and quantity; for He is one in His essence, indivisible; and one in His attributes; there is nothing which is like Him. He has no associate in His divinity, dominion, and providence. There is no other Lord than He, and no other Creator.

Ibn Baåååàl [d. 449 / 1057][17] said: "The title that al-Bukhàrá (d. 256 / 870; Khartanak, Samarkand) has given this chapter [in his famous *hadith* collection called *al-Ãaäää*; namely, the chapter: *Kitàb al-Radd 'alà al-Jahmáyah*[18]] implies that Allah is not a body because bodies are compounded of parts put together, and that [NB: Verify what the antecedent of the demonstrative pronoun is] refutes the Jahmáyah in their belief that He is a body."[19] That is what I found in it [his book]; perhaps he meant to say the Mushabbihah [the sect of anthropomorphists]. As for the Jahmáyah nobody who wrote about the deviant sects[20] ever denied that the Jahmáyah denied the attributes (*al-ãifàt*) [of Allah]; indeed, they charged them with *ta'åál* [denying Allah I the attributes of perfection]. Moreover, it is confirmed that Abâ Äanáfah said: "Ãafwàn went to such an extreme in rejecting *tashbáh* [anthropomorphism][21] that he said Allah was nothing." Al-Kirmàná [who wrote a commentary on al-Bukhàrá (d. 786 / 1384)] said: "The Jahmáyah are a sect of deviant heretics (*mubtad'iah*) who identify themselves with Jahm ibn Ãafwàn the leader of the faction that the slave [of Allah I] has no power whatsoever [that is, he

[17] He lived in Cordoba and wrote a commentary on the *hadith* collection of Imam al-Bukhàrá (d. 256 / 870; Khartank, Samarkand) which collection is called *Ãaäää al-Bukhàrá.*

[18] Ibn Hajr mentioned at the very beginning of his discussion in this chapter that Ibn Baåååàl and Ibn al-Tán transmitted this chapter under the title: *Kitàb al-Radd 'alà al-Jahmáyah.*

[19] *Fatä al-Bàrá ,* pp. 344-345; vol. 13. Ibn Äajr mentioned that Ibn Baåååàl and Ibn al-Tán transmitted the chapter title differently than most transmitters who transmitted the chapter by the title *Kitàb al-Tauäád.*

[20] The books exposing the deviant beliefs of heretical sects ascribing to Islam forms a genre of Islamic religious literature; a large number of these books was written and many are still extant and many are in print.

[21] Jahm ibn Ãafwàn went so far that he denied that Allàh might even share the names of attributes with His creatures. Thus since they are things, and have knowledge and power and will and life and so on, he denied that Allàh could have these attributes. The Ashà'irah, on the other hand, permitted that He share the names of these attributes with His creatures but insisted that that was as far as the likeness went because His attributes are all eternal and perfect whereas theirs are originated and imperfect, thus they are absolutely dissimilar. It is correct to call Allàh a thing because the Qur'àn refers to Him with that term; furthermore, the meaning of His being a thing is that He exists.

> does not have free will]; they are the Jabráyah [the sect of determinists who deny that free man has free will]. He was killed [put to death for heresy] during the reign of Hishàm ibn ‘Abd al-Màlik.” However, what they denounced the Jahmáyah for was not their belief in determinism only; rather, the only thing the *salaf* [the early Muslims, in particular those of the first three centuries] agreed on in denounced them for was their denial of the attributes (*al-ãifàt*).

It seems that the reason Ibn Äajr mentioned the remark of Ibn Baååàl is to bring testimony that; firstly, such anthropomorphic notions as that Allah I is a body, or compounded of parts are diametrically opposed to the notion of *al-tauäád* (the divine uniqueness); and, secondly, that al-Bukhàrá intended to refute the anthropomorphists by including this chapter; that is, the chapter he called *al-Tauäád.*

Notice that the Jahmáyah who denied the attributes of Allah I were denounced by the early and later *‘ulamà* including Ibn Äajr, Ibn Baååàl, and al-Kirmàná. Now these three men were Asharites, or Ashà‘irah to use the Arabic name. The Äashawáyah have forever been accusing the Ashà‘irah of denying the attributes, and for that reason they branded them as Jahmáyah. In our present times, the modern-day representatives of the Äashawáyah, who presumptuously call themselves “Salafis,” also smear the present-day Ashà‘irah with the pejorative label “Jahmáyah,” simply because they understood that some of the terms of Qur’àn and *hadith* were used figuratively not literally. As we will come to see in what follows they did that only to maintain Allah’s perfection. Thus, they did not deny the attributes, but understood some of them figuratively. Now there is a world of difference between taking words in a figurative and metaphorical sense and between denying those words outright. The problem with Jahm ibn Ãafwàn was that he even denied the words. However, I have anticipated myself.

Ibn Äajr has given a very simple definition for *tauäád:* “The repudiation of the notion that Allah Y has any attribute which resembles the attributes of created things (*tashbáh*), and of the notion that He does not possess those transcendent attributes which His perfection and majesty require (*ta‘tál*).” Notice, furthermore, that he has said that this is the definition that the people of the main and orthodox community (cross-reference) have agreed on. I request you to learn these two Arabic terms, if you do not know them already, because they are important technical terms for our topic. The knowledge of the terms facilitates easy discussion. Don’t you see that Ibn Äajr’s definition is actually very simple if we know the meaning of these technical terms: *“Tauäád* is the denial of *tashbáh* and *ta‘åál.”* In other words, *tauäád* is the denial of the imperfect

attributes and the admission of the all the perfect attributes. The imperfect attributes are created ones, while perfect attributes are eternal, transcendent ones. To attribute to Allah Y imperfect qualities is anthropomorphism, or what in Arabic is called *tashbáh,* or *tajsám,* while to deny Him all imperfect attributes is transcendence. Since denying Him all imperfection implies predicating Him (attributing to Him) only perfection, and that is why I said at the outset that transcendence is the essence of *tauäád.*

Now that we have explained the meaning of *tauäád,* let us go back and examine more carefully the statement of Abâ Äanáfah. Notice that he says "we believe" that Allah I is one. The root (*al-maãdàr*) of the Arabic word he used is *i'tiqàd* / اعتقاد. 'Abd al-Ghàná al-Ghunaimá al-Maidàná (d. 1298 / 1881; Damascus), an erudite *'alim* from Damascus and the student of the illustrious Hanafi *faqáh* Ibn 'Àbdán, wrote an excellent and celebrated commentary on *'Aqádatu 'l-Åaääàwáyah* in which he defined here what the word *i'tiqàd* means saying:

والاعتقاد هو الحكم الجازم الذي لا يقبل التشكيك.[22]

> *I'tiqàd* refers to that positive realization that brooks no possibility of doubt.

(NB: Discuss why our *ulama* insist that evidence that is conclusive and certain, not evidence that leaves room for doubt, establishes the subject matter of belief.)

Notice in his definition he did not merely say *shakk* (doubt) but he said *tashkák. Tashkik* means "making someone doubt," so I translated it in context as "no possibility of doubt." Thus *'aqádah* refers to those matters that we know of certainty, matters that nothing can make one doubt. In Islam we are not asked to make-believe, but we are asked to know; that is why we say in the *shahàdah:* "I witness that Allah is the only God." The Christians call the people to make-believe that their Bible which is full of discrepancies, contradictions, obscenities, irrationalities and adulterations, is the inerrant word of God, and to make-believe that God is three separate beings: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; yet these three are one, while the Hindu invites us to make-believe that there are many gods and that the cow and the phallus is one of them. If we invite one of these fantasizers to Islam telling that Islam is a religion that is opposed to make-believe, a religion that has a rational basis, how do we answer them if they ask us to prove that God is one? They do not believe in the Qur'an, nor in the say-

[22] شرح العقيدة الطحاوية, ص 47.

ings of our prophet, so how can we demonstrate first of all that there is one, unique creator before we even begin to discuss the rational basis of the truthfulness of our prophet and the Qur'an? Since the answer to this question is necessary background for the further discussion of our topic, let us investigate the rational basis of our belief in the existence and uniqueness of the Creator.

The rational foundations of belief in the existence of God and His transcendent uniqueness

Suppose that you survived an air crash at sea and washing upon an island shore you walked along the beach to discover a watch ticking away. Would you conclude that some human being had recently been there and left that watch on the shore, or would you assume that the winds and the waves and the blazing sun had acted in concert and fortuitously to marshal the elements into the marvellous artefact of that ticking watch? Of course, you would conclude the former. Then what about the beach and the one standing on it and the sun and the wind and the waves and the sky, may we conclude that that supreme harmony and awesome beauty was the product of some purposeless haphazard process keeping in mind universe is infinitely more complex and perfect than a ticking watch; indeed, the wing of a fly is more complicated than it, nay a single strand of DNA in the wing of a fly, or any molecule of its protein. Indeed, competent researchers and mathematicians have demonstrated that a strand of DNA is more complex than arrangement of letters in a book like Tolstoy's *War and Peace.* Think what are the chances that a machine generating random letters might one day type out the text of *War and Peace?* Mathematicians who are experts in probability insist that even in a billion years a random letter-generator could not type out a page of a beautiful and meaningful book like *War and Peace* let alone a whole book. In fact Richard Dawkins, an outspoken proponent of neo-Darwinist theory, wrote in his book *Climbing Mount Probable* (1996) that the nucleus of any cell "contains a digitally coded database larger in information content than all 30 volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* put together. The impossibility of random processes producing extremely complex and interdependent systems has been capably demonstrated by mathematicians like William Demski in his *The Design Inference: Eliminating Chance through Small Probabilities* (1998) and in his *Intelligent Design* (1999).

In our example above of the beach and the watch it is essential to bear in mind that although both the beach and the watch are products of deliberate premeditated design the difference between a designer of a watch and the designer of the universe is infinite and absolute because while the first merely

manipulated the elements, the second brought the elements into existence in the first place and them formed and empowered everything that manipulates.

Our example is a picturesque representation of one of the rational arguments for the existence of God.[23] It can be expressed in more concisely logical terms thus: The world is designed; everything designed requires a designer; therefore, the world has a designer. Or we can phrase the proposition in another way: The world is originated; everything that is originated requires an originator; therefore the world has an originator. Or alternately: The world is caused; everything that is caused requires a cause; therefore the world has a cause.

Keep in mind as I invoke some logical principles that logic is merely the science of how to think correctly, or in other words what conclusions can be deduced from certain types of premises and what constitutes valid premises. Whether or not those premises concern what is of this world or what is beyond it is immaterial; their validity depends on what they propose not on what their subject is. Now the conclusion that the world has a designer or a primal cause that is not part of it is not dogma; it's cognition.

Let us go back and confirm the validity of the basic premises in the above syllogisms (lines of reasoning). The reason we say that we and all created things have come out of nonexistence is that we know intuitively[24] that neither we nor other created things *had* to exist, for if they *had* to exist they would not be subject to extinction and change. (We will return to this point presently.) We say that things are originated or caused because we observe that everything in creation is in a state of change and every change is the origination of a new state and the extinction of a previous state.

That beginning is an origination, a production and an effect; it therefore needs one to originate, produce, or cause, its new state and that is the necessary existent which men call God. It is futile to claim that other originated things, in particular the previous states of all things, are the sufficient cause of those effects because they are also effects. Even if we assume a chain of cause and effect going back for billions

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[23] In this section I will use refer to Allah as "God" because it is revelation, that is, the Qur'an, that informs us that God's proper name is "Allah," but I have not yet discussed the rational basis of the truthfulness of the Qur'an. The rational basis for that depends on our establishing first of all the existence and uniqueness of God. Once we do that we can proceed to show how the many miraculous aspects of the Qur'an prove that the Creator of the universe has revealed it.

[24] I use the term *intuition* throughout this letter to refer to what we understand a priori; that is, things that we understand without any need for demonstration. Such self-evident truths can also be called axioms. I first learned the word when I was studying physics at Brock University. Professor Kaufman used to use the phrase "we intuit such and such a thing," when he was referring to mathematical or physical propositions that the truth of which was self-evident such as the proposition that the whole is bigger than the part.

and billions of years be are stuck with supposing a primal cause (to use Aristotle's term) which is self-sufficient and self-existent and not merely an effect caused by something else, and furthermore, which is outside the entire chain of originated chain of cause and effect since after all causes are merely effects. This intuition overwhelmed we when I was eighteen years old studying physical and biological sciences at university; it suddenly dawned on me that even if we might explain the development of life from inanimate matter by a supposed evolutionary process, it was impossible to explain the emergence of matter from the void of nonexistence except by supposing that necessary and eternal existent which men call God.

No doubt this matter has been the subject of an age-old controversy between theists and materialists, for materialists insist that the world has always existed. The theists claim that there has always existed an unchangeable, independent and self-existent and self-sufficient being who has given all other beings that are or ever were their origin, while materialists claim that "there has been an infinite succession of changeable and dependent beings produced from one another in an endless progression without any original cause at all."[25] It is either one or the other because a third proposition has never been proposed nor can it be conceived. Now if he consider the claim of the materialists we see that what they in fact propose is an infinite progression of cause and effect that is in fact an endless series of phenomena dependent one on another. Since the series that they conceive includes all dependent and changeable things that are or ever have been, it is clear that the whole series cannot have any physical cause from without, for the series comprises *all* physical phenomena; nor can the series have any cause from within itself for we have already supposed that the existence of nothing in this series is necessary, that is, nothing in the series is self-existent but dependent on what preceded it. At the same time while no part in this series exists of itself independently and necessarily, neither does the whole exist independently and necessarily since self-sufficient

[25] Samuel Clarke, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 10. I am following here Clarke's statement of the argument closely although the matter is set out in every major work of Islamic creed for the last thousand years. I am following him in order to avail myself of his English expression to keep as conventional as possible. At the same time, however, I have felt it necessary to clarify some points in my own words. I am certainly not dependent on him for the argument since I learned it from my own study of Islamic theology long before I ever knew about Clarke. Clarke (1675-1729) was an English philosopher, theologian mathematician and physicist. He not only expounded the classical proofs for the existence of God, but he was a major exponent of Newtonian physics in his day. He was a close friend and disciple of Isaac Newton (1642-1727) and his colleague at Cambridge University. Both Clarke and Newton were unitarians who rejected the false dogma of the trinity and maintained that Jesus was a human being who was commissioned with the responsibility of prophethood that involved communicating to mankind the will of God. The fact that in the eighteenth century most European philosophers tended increasingly to materialism bespeaks of their decadence not of their enlightenment.

or necessary existence is an eternal, essential, intrinsic attribute, not an acquired, originated, extrinsic, relative, or accidental one. Necessary existence, or what theologians and philosophers call necessity for short, is eternal and immutable, not something that might be acquired, for what is produced or acquired is clearly caused or originated not eternal. The opposite of necessary existence is contingent[26] existence. The first term implies that type of existence that we intuit cannot *not* be, while the second type implies the type of existence that we intuit may be just as it may not be. The first is independent, eternal and immutable, while the second (contingent existence) is dependent, originated (that is, qualified by a beginning) and in a constant state of change. Keeping this in mind, we can appreciate that the supposed infinite succession of dependent beings that the materialists (of whatever stripe they be) propose is a series that neither has any original cause, nor can it be the self-sufficient cause of its own existence for nothing in it is necessary or self-existent. It is a clear contradiction: something caused, yet without any cause, or to state it concisely: an effect without an efficient (that is, what affects it in the language of the philosophers). Samuel Clarke (1675-1729) pointed out that the materialists' supposition of "an infinite succession of changeable and dependent beings [that is, phenomena] produced from one another in an endless progression without any original cause at all is only a driving back from one step to another and, as it were, removing out of sight the question concerning the ground or reason of the existence of things,"[27] for as he observed whether we maintain that there is one being which is neither necessary nor self-existent, or whether we maintain an infinite series of dependent beings, neither has any original cause although both are dependent by definition and that is absurd. However, the absurdity of proposition of one dependent effect without any cause is more apparent in the minds of most than the proposition of a series of dependent beings without any original cause. The English philosopher-theologian William Williston (1659-1724) illustrated the absurdity of this proposition with a fine example: Suppose a chain hung down from the heavens from an unknown height so that what it was hung upon was not visible. It remained there fixed in its location without descending. Now suppose one were to ask what supported this chain. Would it be sufficient to answer that the lowest link was held by the one above it and the one above it by the one above it *ad infinitum?* Of course not, for one would need to now what supports the whole. Claiming that the chain is infinite does not resolve the fact that it needs a support, for how ab-

[26] *Contingent* means that a thing may or may be. It can apply to a thing's being as it can apply to its attributes. For example, your existence was merely possible for we can imagine a world without us. In the same way, our attributes are all contingent, for we can imagine ourselves with black hair instead of brown, and stout instead of slim and so on.
[27] Clarke, p. 11.

surd to claim that a finite chain needs a support but an infinite one does not.[28]

You should understand that the proposition of an infinite succession is the essential argument of all materialists. The mechanism they propose for the relation between the individual phenomena in the series is not relevant, for we have shown that the whole series of relationships whatever they suppose them to be is absurd and impossible. Thus, however they suppose that inanimate matter became organic molecules like protein and RNA and DNA and so on, and then that became animate unicellular organisms which in turn supposedly became multicellular organisms which became primitive invertebrates and so on is irrelevant.

Now apart from the fact that even if the chain of phenomena were infinite it would still be dependent and originated, there is another glaring problem with the proposition of an infinite succession, for while infinity may exist in our imaginations it does not exist in actuality. No doubt my claim may jolt you as it did me when I first heard it, but it is clearly the case. You can start from today and for the rest of your life write bigger and bigger numbers but by the time you die you will still have a finite number. Set up a computer to continuously raise a number to its own power so that it soon generates astronomically big numbers, but by the time it wears down or by the time technological civilization extinguishes itself it will only have generated an infinite number. We intuit that quite naturally because we know that what is composed of finite parts can only be finite. That has traditionally been illustrated in real theology by considering two progressions of phenomena: one from this moment back forever, and another from the moment of, say, your birth forever. Now take these two progressions and imagine that they are put side by side. You can imagine that ever phenomena is numbered and counted. Will not the sequence which goes back forever from the present forever exceed the sequence which goes back forever from the moment of your birth by the finite extent of your age? No doubt it will since the number of phenomena that have accompanied your existence from birth till present is clearly finite. Since the difference between the two progressions is finite, the two progressions must themselves be finite.

Be that as it may, I remind you that even if we concede that the sequence is infinite it does not avail the materialists because our supposition is that the chain is composed of an infinite number of contingent, originated and dependent phenomena; therefore, no matter how long the sequence might be every unit of it, that is every individual phenomena is dependent on what might cause it, originate it, and endow it with its particular qualities instead of other qualities. I have already stated as much; I have only restated it to remind you and to emphasize it.

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[28] This illustration is based on William Wollaston's in his *The Religion of Nature Delineated* (London, Samuel Palmer, 1724; reprint New York, Garland Publishing Co. 1978), p. 67.

A lucid example has been given by Muslim theologians to illustrate the point that the length of the sequence does not matter. If you instruct your computer to write out rows of zeroes, will not its significance remain zero even if you programmed the computer to produce zeroes forever? (However, it will only be able to do it, until it breaks down or as long as you pay the hydro bill.) But if you put a single integer between one and nine, even just a "one," at the left of those zeroes, will not that change the matter dramatically? Of course it will because now you will have quantity whereas before you had nothing. No matter how many zeroes we might write we would never get quantity until we put a real number at their left. In the same a lie does not become truth even if we add to it more lies or innumerable lies. And in the same way how will originated phenomena (that is, phenomena each one of which is preceded by nonexistence) become necessary (that is, nonexistence is impossible for it) just because their number became large or let us for the sake of argument say infinite? It is impossible; therefore, we must suppose an independent, self-existent, self-sufficient, immutable, transcendent and necessary being in existence before the sequence of dependent phenomena, and in short a being who was not preceded by nonexistence. The English call that being God. The cognition of God is not a projection of the mind; rather it is a logical necessity, an objective truth that the mind is capable of intuiting definitively, not an inconclusive metaphysical speculation, nor a subjective phenomenon that the mind invents.

In the same way that we can comprehend intuitively and logically what is necessary for the divine being, we can intuit what attributes He must have.[29] In general, He is described by every attribute of perfection, for if He had any imperfection it would be inconceivable that He could have brought this universe out of nonexistence. In particular, we intuit that he is powerful, knowing, and willing because were He not both powerful and knowledgeable, He would not have been able to create the universe and then maintain it through every moment, and were He not willing He could not choose its existence instead of its nonexistence at every moment, nor could He choose to endow every existent thing with the attributes with which they are endowed rather than other conceivably possible attributes. Furthermore, we maintain that He is living, for were He not living his power, knowledge and willing would not have any meaning. We also maintain that He is seeing, hearing, and speaking. These attributes are considered perfections in human beings whom God created; it is therefore inconceivable that He who endowed them with these attributes should Himself be deprived of such perfection. Nonetheless, His attributes are utterly different from our attrib-

[29] We mean by the term attribute those realities which we intuit logically and rationally subsist in the being of God and while they befit His transcendent being (in that they are necessary rather than contingent) they are neither the being itself nor other than it.

utes that bear the same names because His attributes are necessary, eternal, and transcendent. He has known and willed and empowered since all eternity, yet his knowledge, His will and His empowerment are one and do not change, and they are perfect beyond any need to become perfected. He knew before there existed anything to be known, and He knows all that might have been were He to have willed it. His knowledge did not become more complete when the things that He knew came into existence. While human knowledge is dependent on the existence of the things to be known and unfolds gradually and is subject to disappearance and change, the knowledge of God does not have any such imperfection. He knows what stirs inside cells and in the farthest stars, the movement of every atom and molecule of existence; He knows the whispering in the depth of our souls, every secret agony, our ennui, our bliss, all has been know to Him through all eternity. How could it be otherwise when every contingent thing is continually in need of Him to sustain its existence and to create its forthcoming states?

Similarly, He sees and hears in a transcendent way in pre-eternity[30] without the need of any organ and without the phenomena of rays of light or waves of sound, and without their being any distance or direction between Him and what He sees and Hears and yet without Him being present there either. He saw and heard all things before the things that might be seen, heard even existed. As with his knowledge, His sight and hearing is one and indivisible. His attribute of seeing and hearing does not acquire anything new upon the creation of new sights and sounds; rather, He as already heard and seen all things since all eternity. Know that this must be so, for were God to undergo any change, or were anything to happen in His being, that would mean that He was originated and contingent and thus not the necessary existent. Like all other attributes, we cannot imagine how God hears and sees in pre-eternity; however, we know that He must for He is perfect in both being and attribute. Furthermore, we maintain that God speaks because the ability to communicate one's thoughts and will is perfection among humans while the inability to do so is regarded by them as a defect. Muslim scholars say that the speech of God refers to the speech of the divine self. Having said this I should point out that many of our scholars opine that the last three attributes that I have mentioned are not known by reason directly but through true revelation. Since I have not yet discussed the rational basis of revelation and what distinguishes true revelation from false, I did not want to anticipate myself. For the time being let us assume that that can be intuited by reason, and then leave the discussion of revelation for another occasion. To continue, I

[30] That is, in time without any beginning, or since all eternity. Actually, time has no relevance to God. Time is merely a relationship of bodies and a reference to the changes they undergo. However, God is neither a body nor does He undergo any change; He simply *is.* *Was* and *will be* apply to created things, not to Him.

should say that the speech of God cannot be heard for it is one and pre-eternal like all His transcendent attributes. Yet God revealed His eternal speech to those He chose as prophets, for He commissioned the Archangel Gabriel to reveal to the prophet words and sounds that indicate that eternal speech communicating to them something of His knowledge and His will. While we also call this revealed speech the word of God, the letters and sounds that indicate that eternal speech are originated. What God revealed to Moses was called the Torah; what He revealed to David was called the Psalms; what He revealed to Jesus was called the Bible[31]; and what He revealed to Muhammad was called the Qur'an.

The last of God's attributes is creation; it comprehends every type of act including annihilation, anger, love, provision, reward and punishment. God acted in pre-eternity and while His act is one and indivisible, the manifestation of His eternal act is multiple and it appears in time by His power and according to His will. Furthermore, His act is manifested in other than Himself while the acts with which He empowers His creatures are manifested in themselves. All that happens in this world and the next is the manifestation of God's pre-eternal act. This is the secret to understanding how God acts and yet does not undergo any change.

Let me remind you that while we intuit what is necessary for Him in His being, His attributes and His act, we cannot imagine how He exists, or how He is, or how He acts. How can what is created out of nothing and exists in time and space ever comprehend what creates and exists beyond time and space without having any of the attributes of bodies or other created things? How can what was preceded by nonexistence comprehend that which was not preceded by it?

(NB: It may be needed to discuss at this juncture the rational basis for the belief in revelation. Read the article over and see what's needed to improve the cohesion of your general argument)

Having shown that reason is what compels us to believe in Allah Ψ and to maintain His transcendence let us return to the passage from Imam al-Åaääàwi that I quoted above, keeping in mind that he is actually quoting the imam of imams Abâ Äanáfah. Consider that al-Åaääàwi said:

[31] The original Bible that was revealed to Jesus was lost long ago. We do not know whether it was ever written down or not. While the anonymous gospels may contain some of the original Bible, they certainly are not to be equated with that original. As for the Torah of Moses and the Psalms of David, they were lost and rediscovered at least twice and they suffered much adulteration and editing at the hands of venal scribes.

ما زال بصفاته قديما قبل خلقه لم يزدد بكونهم شيئا لم يكن قبلهم من صفاته وكما كان بصفاته أزليا كذلك لا يزال عليها أبديا.[32] (جديد)

> His attributes were eternal (*qadám*) [that is, un-originated and without any beginning] before He created [the universe]. After the existence of things, His attributes did not increase [or change] beyond what they were before the existence of those things. As He was with His attributes in pre-eternity, so He will not cease to be forevermore.

He continued by giving some specific examples to illustrate the point his has made about the divine attributes:

ليس منذ خلق الخلق استفاد اسم الخالق ولا بإحداثه البرية استفاد اسم البارئ, له منعى الربوبية ولا مربوب, ومعنى الخالقية ولا مخلوق, وكما أنه محي الموتى بعدما أحياهم استحق هذا الاسم قبل إحيائهم كذلك استحق اسم الخالق قبل إنشائهم.[33] (جديد)

> He did not acquire the name the Creator (*al-Khàliq*) after He created the creation, just as He did not acquire the name the Originator (*al-Bàri'*) by originating the creatures. He possessed the attribute of lordship (*al-rubâbáyah*) before there existed anything for Him to be lord[34] of, just as He possessed the attribute of creating before there existed any creation.

It is imperative that we always keep in mind when we talk about the divine attributes that they are eternal or pre-eternal[35], that is, they always existed as attributes of the divine being without having any beginning in time. He was knowing before the things which can be known existed; He was seeing before anything existed which can be seen; He was hearing before there existed anything which can be heard, and so on. With this in mind one can better appreciate the absurdity, the blasphemy of the notion that God created the Throne then sat on it, or *hovered* somewhere above it, and created the creatures then looked at them with two eyes, and spoke to them with words and sounds.

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[32] من متن شرح العقيدة الطحاوية المسماة ب بيان عقيدة أهل السنة والجماعة, ص 56.

[33] من متن شرح العقيدة الطحاوية المسماة ب بيان عقيدة أهل السنة والجماعة, ص 56-57.

[34] Al-Ràghib mentioned in his *Mufraçat al-Qur'àn* that the original meaning of the word *rabb is to raise, or care for* (*al-tarbáyah*) something which means to nurture something from stage to stage until it reaches its completeness.

[35] Keep in mind for Allah there is no time, no past, no future, and not even present; He simply *is.* That is what we mean when we say that He is eternal, which in Arabic is called *qadám,* but when we want to emphasize the fact that His attributes have no beginning we use the word preeternal in English, or *azl* in Arabic. This is not to imply that Allah experiences a time before, but only to dispel the notion that something happened by reminding ourselves that He was not preceded by anything, yet He precedes the existence of all things.

God existed before He created time and space, and before the Throne or the universe existed. Before the physical order existed, He existed without any physical attribute. How could He exist in location when space did not exist? How could any limits or form define him when space did not exist? How was it conceivable that He move or change when neither time nor space existed? How could He be described by direction when neither bodies nor directions existed? When He originated the physical order, its origination did not cause any change in Him, nor did He get any new attributes. He existed without location before He created space, and so He will exist forevermore. He existed without limit and direction before He created bodies, and so He will exist forevermore. He is absolutely beyond change because every change implies a beginning, and every beginning requires a maker; whatever requires a maker could not itself be the maker of the universe.

The people of truth[36] insist that the existence of Allah Ψ is necessary, for the world needs a maker. It means to say that Allah Ι can not be; whereas, every created thing, logically speaking, may exist and may not exist–that is, it is contingent. As certain as we are about the existence of the universe, we are certain about the existence of its God. However, that does not mean that we can imagine the nature of the existence of God. Indeed, we cannot as al-Taääwá declares: "No one can imagine Him, nor understand Him." How can we creatures who dwell in time and space comprehend the creator of time and space? There is no hope of that, for there is nothing common between the creature and the Creator. That is why the Qur'àn declares: "Is He who creates like he who does not create?"[37] Our inability to understand the nature of the existence of Allah Ι does not impair our certainty about His existence. This is a crucial point. Anthropomorphists object saying that if we deny that God exists in space and time, or that direction does not encompass Him, and

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[36] I am using the term used by Sa'd al-Dán al-Taftàzàná (d. 793 / 1390; Samarkand) in the opening of his classic work on Belief, *al-'Aqà'id al-Nasafáyah.* I mean to refer, as did he, to the main and orthodox community of Muslims whom the Prophet ρ proclaimed will never agree all together on error. He υ referred to the main community as *Ahl al-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamà'ah* (that is, the People of the Sunnah and the Community) which he described in numerous reports as *sawàd al-a'zam* which literally means the great blackness, but was used idiomatically by the Arabs to refer to a great mass of mankind which because of its denseness appears in the distance especially in the environment of the Arabs as a blackness. Thus the term *sawàd al-a'zam* means *the main community of Muslims* as was explained in *Misbaä al-Munár,* and *Majma' Biäàr al-Anwàr.* The Prophet ρ ordered as to stick to the main community, and he meant the community of the majority of Muslims. The number of *hadiths* reported to this effect is easily one hundred *hadith*, and as such it is a categorical injunction, and a basic Islamic principle. There are many conflicting sects all claiming to be the true representatives of the Sunnah. However, there is only one *main* community. When all is said and done, numbers is what counts. Those who are bewildered by the number of conflicting sects all claiming to be *the People of the Sunnah* should take this clue and be guided by it through the pounding reefs of dissension.

[37] *Surah al-Naäl*, 16:17

so on, we deny His existence. However, the fact is we deny the possibility of comprehending the nature of His existence while maintaining absolutely the necessity of His existence. The fundamental mistake of the anthropomorphists is to apply the logic of bodies to the creator of bodies.

(NB: Explain the meaning of attribute, and distinguish between the divine attribute and the divine act. Make sure that you have by now explained all technical terms and concepts that you will need for the rest of the article including *tawàtur, ahlu 'l-sunnah, àhad* and explain why *'àqidah* depends only on *tawàtur* refuting those who deny that. Decide whether to explain how the law depends on reason, and what are the limitations of reason, or whether to leave it till the discussion of Kamàl ibn Abá Sharáf.)

Imam Malik's Response to a Question Addressed to Him on the Meaning of Allah's *Istiwa* on the Throne

Imam al-Baihaqá[38] (d. 458 h. / 1066; Niãàpur) a great *muäaddith*, and the student of Abâ ´Abd Allah al-Äàkim (d.405 h. / 1014) in his book called *al-Asmà' wa 'l-Ãifàt* reported three accounts of an incident that transpired with Imam Màlik (93-179 H. = 712-795 C.E.). The first report which al-Baihaqá reported with a chain of narration (which I will omit here and in subsequent reports) is the account transmitted by his student, the famous *muäaddith* 'Abd Allah ibn Wahb ibn Muslim al-Fihrá of Egypt (125-197 H. = 743-813 C.E.):

كنّا عند مالك بن أنس, فدخل رجل, فقال: يا أبا عبد الله: الرحمن على العرش استوى. كيف استواؤه؟ قال: فأطرق مالك وأخذته الرحضاء, ثمّ رفع رأسه فقال: الرحمن على العرش استوى كما وصف نفسه, ولا يقال كيف, و كيف عنه مرفوع, وأنت رجل سوء, صاحب بدعة, أخرجوه. قال: فأخرج الرجل.[39]

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[38] Abâ Bakr al-Baihaqi was one of the most eminent *'ulamà'* of the Shafi *Madhhab,* and a *muäaddith* of the highest rank. Tàj al-Dán al-Subká mentioned that al-Baihaqá was the most outstanding student of Äàfiæ Abâ 'Abd Allàh al-Äàkim (d.405 h. / 1014), the latter who al-Subká said heard *hadith* from two thousand shaikhs.[38] Imam al-Äaramain al-Juwainá (d. 478 / 1085; Nishapur) said: "There is not a follower of the Shafi *Madhhab* who does not owe a debt of obligation to Imam Shàfi'á, except al-Baihaqá, for in his case al-Shàfi'á owes a debt of obligation to him because of the books al-Baihaqá wrote in support of al-Shàfi'á's *madhhab* and opinions."[38] Al-Baihaqá wrote a spe-cial work on the ambiguous *hadīth* (*al-mutashàbihàt*) in which he mentioned most of what has been reported of them, mentioning as well the ambiguous verses of the Qur'àn which outwardly imply that Allàh has human or created attributes. His primary purpose in compiling the work, which he called *Kitàb al-Asmà' wa 'l-Ãifàt,* was to illustrate that none of these *hadith* are to be construed literally. He showed that when such *hadith* are established to be *hadith* in fact (because some the ambiguous *hadith* are clearly forged), then we are bound to either interpret them if that is possible or to consign their meaning to Allàh if no interpretation is forthcoming or if what has been suggested is farfetched or problematic. He cited in numerous instances cases of interpretation reported with authentic chains of narration from the Companions, and the Followers, and the *Salaf,* and he gave innumerable examples of idiomatic usage of such terms in Arabic poetry and literature, and he adduced the statements of the great authorities of Arabic language. Tàj al-Dán al-Subká said that he did not know of any other book which can compare with *Kitàb al-Asmà' wa 'l-Ãifàt*.

[39] الأسماء والصفات للبيهقي, باب ما جاء في قول الله عزّ وجلّ {الرحمن على العرش استوى}, ص515, دار الكتب العلمية, بيروت.

> We were with Màlik ibn Anas when a man came in and said: "O Abâ 'Abd Allah, al-Raämàn made *istiwà* on the throne. How did he make *istiwà?*" Màlik bowed his head [in thought] and sweat appeared on him. He said: "Al-Raämàn did make *istiwà* on the Throne as He said about himself, but we do not ask how, for *how* does not apply to him [since He is not a body having physical properties]. Moreover, you are a bad person, the perpetrator of a deviation (*bid'ah*). Put him out!" And the man was put out.

I have avoided translating the word *istiwà* here, because the point in this account is that the word is ambiguous; it has a literal meanings and a figurative ones; if I were to translate it I would have to choose one or the other and the ambiguity would not be apparent. The phrase *istiwà 'ala'l-'arsh* is that type of speech which the *'ulamà'* call *mutashàbihàtu 'l-ãifàt,* which refers to ambivalent terms which describe, or predicate Allah I, the Exalted; their literal meaning implies a physical property, or an originated quality, and in that they are problematic; yet, they have figurative meanings which express attributes of perfection, and befit the transcendent majesty of the Creator. The inalienable and basic Islamic principle of *tauääd,* which provides that Allah Ψ is unique in his being, attributes, and acts requires that He should not have attributes of anything in creation. Thus He must be beyond space and time and limit and direction and movement and change, for were He to possess any of these originated qualities, He would be in need of one to originate them in Him and whatever has any need could not be the transcendent, all-powerful creator of this universe.

Therefore, we are bound to refrain from imagining that the literal meaning is implied, and either we should consign to Allah Ψ the determination of some other suitable meaning, which method is called *tafwáç,* or we should accept what the competent and recognized authorities have ventured as an acceptable interpretation, for they advance only such interpretations as are acceptable to the recognized experts of the Arabic language and as are appropriate as far as the transcendence and perfection of Allah I is concerned; this latter method is called *ta'wál.* The first was the usual method of the Companions, and the Followers, and the Followers of the Followers, and the early Muslims, while the second is the usual method of later *'ulamà'* who felt that the method of *ta'wál* was better suited to keep the common people and those who had little initiation in the sciences of the *sharà'ah* from interpreting the *mutashàbihàt* literally. Interpreting literally the allegorical texts that outwardly imply human or originated attributes is called *tajsám* or *tashbáh* in Arabic, and it is called anthropomorphism in English. Interpreting it literally is blasphemy; it constitutes unbelief for it implies that Allah I has imperfect, originated attributes that He shares with His creation.

The literal interpretation of *istiwà* is "ascended," or "sat on." The anthropomorphists insist that the *ayats* that mention *istiwà* are a proof that Allah I is above His creation and above the

Throne and that He occupies place and has a limit and direction. What prevailed upon them to utter such blasphemy is their belief that the Qur'an and the speech of the Prophet ρ do not contain any figures of speech, or metaphor (*majàz*). Their denial of the figurative and idiomatic use of language in the Qur'an and *sunnah* is preposterous and betrays their neglect of the fact that the Qur'an is Arabic and that the Prophet ρ was an Arab and that the Arabic language in a most preeminent way is a language of imagery (*tamthál*) and metaphor (*isti'àrah*).

Those who foolishly insist that everything in the Qur'an is literal get stuck with the problem of contradiction. Consider that Allah Y says in many places that He will forget the unbelievers after He puts them in Hell. An example of that is *Surah al-Sajdah:*

(فَذُوقُوا بِمَا نَسِيتُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا إِنَّا نَسِينَاكُمْ وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْخُلْدِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ) (السجدة:14)

> Taste because you forgot about this day of your meeting; We will forget you. Taste eternal punishment because of what you used to do! (33:14)

As you see, the literal meaning of the *ayah* is that Allah I will forget, that is, He will cease to have knowledge about them. That meaning is highly problematic because first of all Allah Y reports in another place in the Qur'an that the angels declare that He never forgets anything: "And your Lord is not forgetful" (19:64). Secondly, Allah Y is the one who creates and sustains everything including all that is in Hell. If He did not have the knowledge of them there, how does He create their punishment? Furthermore, if He were to become ignorant of a thing after having had knowledge of it, it would mean that He would have undergone, yet first principles require that Allah Y, the creator of the universe, is eternal and beyond change. Therefore, we have to interpret this phrase figuratively and hold that it expresses the fact that He will deprive them of His mercy and care. Thus we can construe the above-mentioned *ayah* like this:

> Taste [s: the punishment] because you forgot [s, n: that is, you disbelieved] about this day of your meeting [with Us]; We will forget you [n: that is, We will abandon you in Hell like a thing forgotten about]. Taste eternal punishment because of what you used to do!

Consider that Allah I says in *Surah al-Aäzàb:*

(إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَاباً مُهِيناً) (الأحزاب:57)

> Those who hurt Allah and His messenger, Allah has cursed them in this world and the next and prepared for them a humiliating punishment. (33:57)

The literal meaning implies that Allah Y can suffer harm, but that is highly problematic because it means that a state of adverse change overcomes Him with the further implication that that is against his will and that He does not have the power to stop it. However, first principles require that He is eternal and beyond change and that He not be described by any of the attributes of His creatures. The Qur'an declares: "Nothing is like Him." If He suffered harm as we do, He would resemble us in this liability. However, He is utterly dissimilar with His creatures as the *ayah* I just quoted and first principles require, for none of His attributes are originated or subject to change; He is the transcendent, ineffable and incomparable, the eternal God and Lord of Creation. Thus, we have to interpret these words in a figurative way. The commentators, including al-Alâsá al-Kabár (d. 1270 / 1854), the author of the celebrated and authoritative commentary of the Qur'an, *Râhu 'l-Ma'àná,* says it refers to those who displease Allah I and His Messenger by committing unbelief and disobedience. Moreover, the experts in the science of belief, or creed (*al-'aqádah*) (NB: these experts are properly and traditionally referred to as *al-mutakallimân*, and the science of belief as *al-kalàm*), explain Allah's displeasure as His will to deprive and punish. Those who insist that there are no figures of speech (*majàz*) have to break their rule and indulge in idiomatic interpretation. Why do they not then admit that some phrases in the Qur'an may not be interpreted literally and join the rest of the *ummah* instead of denouncing them as heretics and unbelievers and dividing the *ummah* into quarreling factions at a time that they desperately need to be united to stop the mischief of the real enemies of Islam; namely, the unbelievers?

Indeed, another good example of phrases which cannot but be interpreted figuratively is one of the *ayats* which mention *istiwà;* I refer to the 4th *ayah* of *Surah al-Äadád:*

(هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ وَاللهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ) (الحديد:4)

> It is He who created the skies and the earth in six days and then made *istiwà* on the Throne. He knows what enters the earth [n: seeds, rain, treasure and the dead] and what comes out of it [n: plants and so on], and what comes down from the sky [n: angels and the rain] and what goes up to it [n. deeds and prayers ‖ the angels ascend with them to the Throne] and He is with you wherever you are [n: with His knowledge and power in all cases and with His grace and mercy in some cases], and Allah sees what you are doing [n: and He will requite you according to your deeds]. (57:4)

The above translation is according to the interpretation of a competent and illustrious commentator of the Qur'an, the Äanafá imam, Abâ 'l-Barakàt al-Nasafá (d. 710 / 1310; Baghdad), who wrote the distinguished and popular commentary called *Mudàrik al-Tanzál* which is more popularly referred to as *Tafsár al-Nasafá.* This

commentary has been on the curriculum of al-Azhar University for centuries and it is studied today all over the Muslim world from Afghanistan to Mauritania. I have indicated that the interpolations I have made are his by the initial "n". Those who foolishly hold that we have to interpret everything in the Qur'an literally insist that *istiwà 'alà'l-'arsh* in the above-cited *ayah* means "to ascend the Throne," or "to sit down on the Throne," or "to hover above the Throne" or that it means that Allah I is literally *fauq,* that is, "up," or above, have got a real problem here because if we take the whole *ayah* literally we clearly have a contradiction. For while at the beginning of the *ayah* they assert that He is on the Throne, they must assert at the end of it that He is with us wherever we are. Now which is it? Is He on the Throne or with us? In order to get out of their dilemma, they are forced to interpret the words "with you wherever you are," and thus they say, as do the rest of us, that it means He is with us with His knowledge, His solicitude, His hearing, His sight, His creating and so on. However, in resorting to interpretation they broke their rule. Either they have to admit that some phrases of the Qur'an are figurative and let everybody else interpret when it is necessary, or they have to stick with their ridiculous rule that everything in the Qur'an is literal and live with all the absurdity and blasphemy that that entails.

Consider that Allah Ψ says:

(وَاللهُ أَنْبَتَكُمْ مِنَ الأَرْضِ نَبَاتاً) (نوح:17)

> And Allah will grow you [n: the expression is a metaphor for "produce you"] from the earth. (71:17)

(إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الأَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا وَأَخْرَجَتِ الأَرْضُ أَثْقَالَهَا) (الزلزلة:1-2)

> When the earth is quaked fiercely, and when the earth throws forth her burdens. (99:1-2)

Notice that in the first *surah,* Allah I says that He will produce mankind, while in the second He ascribes the production of mankind to the earth. In the first *surah* the act is attributed to Allah Y literally, whereas, in the second it is attributed to the earth figuratively. Since Allah I empowers the earth, and since it acts by His permission and is the locus of the action it is permissible to ascribe the act to it, yet every believer knows that it is Allah I who actually creates the act and empowers the earth. Almost every textbook of *'ilm al-ma'àná* (a branch of Arabic rhetoric), including *Talkhãã al-Miftàä* and its commentaries, gives the example of "The spring produced grass" in the section dealing with figurative speech (*majàz*). They discuss that whether or not this statement is to be taken literally depends on the circumstances. We have to see who the speaker is; thus, if the speaker is an unbeliever, we will understand that he means it literally, that is, the spring acted independently with its own inherent power to produce the grass. On the other hand, if the speaker were a be-

liever, we would understand that he meant that in a manner of speaking, and figuratively since we know that the believer knows that nothing Allah Ψ alone has power. In the same way, if a believer says the doctor cured me, or the penicillin cured me we will not accuse him of *shirk* if he is a believer, rather, we will appreciate that he is speaking figuratively. Similarly if a person says, the food made my sick, we will judge his meaning according to the circumstances. Thus, if he is a believer, we will take it metaphorically, and if he is not, literally. Although, this matter is quite straightforward, and a routine practice among believers, a growing cadre of blockheads has spread confusion far and wide. No wonder, Imam Fakhr al-Dán al-Ràzá (d. 606 h. / 1210; Herat) proclaimed that what has caused the *Äashawáyah* to deviate in respect of the allegorical texts (*al-mutashàbihàt*) is there ignorance of the usage of Arabic language (*al-balàghah*).

Having shown that the Qur'an because it is Arabic contains the idioms of the Arabs, let us return to our discussion of *istiwà.* Amongst the figurative interpretations of *istiwà* is "subdued" or "took control of"; indeed, it has been in common use in this sense among the Arabs until this day, for they routinely say *istiwà 'alà 'arsh al-mamlukah* meaning literally that he sat on, or ascended the Throne, and figuratively that he assumed the rule of the kingdom. The authoritative Arabic dictionary called *Miãbàh al-Munár* says under the discussion of *sawà /* سوى:

> *Wa istawà 'alà sarári 'l-mulk;* that is "He ascended the throne of the kingdom" is a metaphor (or metonym) for the assumption of sovereignty even if he [the ruler] did not actually sit on it.

Thus, one could use this term to refer to a person who assumed the rule of a kingdom even if he never sat on the Throne, or even if there actually was no throne. Such use of the term is demonstrated in a famous *ayah* of classical Arabic poetry which the supreme spokesman of Islamic orthodoxy, Abâ'l-Äasan al-Ash'ará (d. 324 / 936; Baghdad), quoted in explaining the meaning of *istiwà* in this *àyah* as the Shafi imam and *muäaddith* al-Baihaqá (d.458 / 1066) reported in his *al-Asmà wa'l-Ãifàt* in the chapter on *al-Istiwà*[40]:

قد استوى بشر على العراق من غير سيف ولا دم مهراق

> *Qad istawà Bishr 'alà'l-'Iràq min ghair saifin wa là damin muhràq;* that is "Bishr subjugated [or took control of] Iraq without using a sword, and without spilling any blood."

Conversely, the Arabs say *thalla 'arshahâ,* which literally means "he tore down his throne," or "removed him from the throne"; but the phrase is used figuratively for "he deposed him," or "put him out of power" without any suggestion that he actually went up to the king while he was sitting on this throne and dragged him off

[40] *Al-Asmà wa'l-Ãifàt* by al-Baihaqá (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmáyah), p. 519.

it in front of his courtiers; indeed this term like its opposite, *istiwà,* may be used for rulers who do not even have a throne, like the presidents in our world today. Knowing this keep in mind that Allah I, addressed the Arabs in the language that they knew and used, they the people that the Prophet ρ praised as "a nation of orators," they the people that dazzled the world with their eloquence and metaphor and earned for their language a reputation among the community of nations as a language unrivalled in its colorful and imaginative idiom, and its rich, eloquent metaphor.

No doubt, the sect of anthropomorphists, which the *'ulamà* call *al-Äashawáyah,* which plague the field of Islam today, object that "subjugation" or "taking control" implies that Allah Ψ was not previously in control, which of course is a defect. The answer is that indeed Allah Y was in control previously, but He controlled it directly without acting through any agent; after the act of *istiwà* He governed His universe through the Throne, for that is the court where the angels receive their instructions about the management of the universe. In this interpretation, *istiwà* is a term referring to the divine act just as *irzàq* (provision) and *imàtah* (causing to die) and *iäyà* (giving life) are divine acts; rather than divine attributes according to the view of the Màturádiyah, and (they represent the great majority of the *mutakallimân* who ascribe to the Hanafi Madhhab) or as *içàfàt,* which we can translate as "ascriptions" for lack of a better term, according to the Ashà'irah (who represent the vast majority of the *mutakallimân* who ascribe to the Màliká, Shàfi'á Madhhabs and many of illustrious *'ulamà'* of the Äanbalá Madhhab).

At this point I should explain what the *'ulamà'* mean by the term attribute, for it is imperative that we understand the term correctly. Failure to understand the term correctly, was what caused the Christians to deviate before Islam, and it has caused the Äashawáyah to deviate in Islam. An attribute (*ãifah*) in non-technical usage refers to an idea that subsists in a thing's being and it refers to the thing in the same way that the sound of a word indicated the word. However, technically a divine attribute refers to what is necessary for Allah Ψ, by force of reason and the holy law of meanings which are intuited as ideas that subsist in the divine being and which are appropriate for Him and commensurate with His exalted majesty and perfection, and yet they are neither identical with the divine being nor other than Him.

Having discussed the meaning of attriubute, we can now proceed to explain that the difference between an attribute of divine being (*ãifàtu 'l-dhàt*) and an attribute of divine act is that an attribute of being is preeternal and subsists in the divine reality; whereas, while Allah's the attribute of divine act also subsists in Him and is therefore preeternal, yet the effect of his act, which the Màturidáyah call *al-ta'alluq,* unfolds in time and appears in space. According to them. His eternal act has effects that manifest in time and space according to His will by His power and according to His wisdom. They hold that the effect of His act (*al-ta'alluq*) is originated, and it manifests in time and in place. Furthermore, as Abâ Bakr Ibn al-'Arabá (d. 543 / 1148; Fez), the Màliká *muäaddith*, commentator, and *faqih* pointed out,

the effects of Allah's eternal act manifests in other than Himself. This is a vital point and is not properly appreciated by most people. Keeping this in mind, one should be able to appreciate why it is of great significance that the word *thumma* is used in this *ayah*; for *thumma* means "then," and the Arab grammarians point out that it generally refers to something that transpires after a while. Now since the attributes are those perfect qualities that subsist in the divine being (*al-dhàt*) since preeternity, they are *not* something that came into existence after they were not. Since the word *thumma* qualifies *istiwà,* it is known that it happened after it was not, thus *istiwà* cannot possibly refer to a divine attribute, for the attributes are eternal and like the divine reality in which they subsist, they are beyond change. Therefore, *istiwà* can only refer to the effect (*al-ta'alluq*) of the divine act. This point was emphasized by al-Baihaqá who said that *thumma* relates to what is acted upon (*al-mustawin 'alaihá*) not the act, or *istiwà* (p. 517). This is the position of the supreme champion of Islamic orthodoxy, Abâ'l-Äasan al-Ash'ará, as al-Baihaqá reported (p. 517-519), and as Imam Muäammad Zàhid al-Kauthará (d. 1371 / 1952; Cairo) mentioned in a footnote to the same book (p. 516). Furthermore, this interpretation is suggested by the wording of some of the *ayats* which mention *al-istiwà* on the Throne, or the wording of *ayats* which follow it:

(إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُدَبِّرُ الأَمْرَ مَا مِنْ شَفِيعٍ إِلاَّ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِذْنِهِ ذَلِكُمُ اللهُ رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ أَفَلا تَذَكَّرُونَ) (يونس:3)

> Verily, your Lord is Allah who created the heavens and the earth in six days [that is, the effect of His act unfolded at the hands of His angels His agents in six days; otherwise, Allah's act in preeternity was a single act not a successive one] then made *istiwà* on the Throne administering His affair. [The last phrase "administering His affair" is translated with the view that the clause is what is called *jumlatun ääläyah;* however, it we take the view that it is another predicate of the subject of the sentence "your Lord," we should translate it thus: "and He administers His affair," and if we view it as a new and separate sentence then we should translate it thus: "He administers His affair."] There is no one who intercedes except after His permission. That [the creator, the administrator] is your Lord. So worship Him. Will you not reflect [over this remonstration and worship Him alone]? (10:3)

(إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثاً وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ أَلا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالأَمْرُ تَبَارَكَ اللهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ) (لأعراف:54)

> Verily, your Lord is Allah who created the heavens and the earth in six days [n: in view of the work of the angels which was gradual and successive], then he made *istiwà* on the Throne making the night cover the day [or making the night catch up to the day—al-Nasafá]; seeking it in haste. [He created] the sun and the moon and the stars each one is in subjection to His command. [n: alternately, the last clause can be construed thus: The sun and the moon and the stars are subjected to His command.] Behold, *His* is the creation, and *His* is the command! Ever blessed is He, the Lord of all things! (7:54)

(اللهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلا شَفِيعٍ أَفَلا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ يُدَبِّرُ الأَمْرَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى الأَرْضِ ثُمَّ يَعْرُجُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ مِمَّا تَعُدُّونَ) (السجدة:4-5)

> Allah is the one who created the skies and the earth and all that is between them in six days, then he made *istiwà* on the Throne. He administers His affair from the sky to the earth. Other than Him you have neither helper nor intercessor. Do you not reflect [so you believe in this]? He administer His affair from the sky to the earth [s: while the world lasts], then [s: the administration of affairs] returns to Him on a day [n: the Day of Judgment] the length of which is one thousand years according to how you count. (32:4-5)

In the preceding translations “s” indicates interpolations taken from the commentary of al-Suyuti and al-Maäallá called *al-Jalàlain,* while “n” indicates al-Nasafá as mentioned previously. In these two *ayats* of *Suratu ’l-Sajdah,* Allah Y informs us that while the world lasts He will govern it through an intermediary; that is, the agent of the Throne “from the sky to the earth,” but that on the Day of Judgement He will administer His affair directly. That is to say that while the world lasts, it is Allah’s usual way that He acts through the agent of the Throne, but that after that He will act directly, as indeed, He acted before He created the Throne and took control of it.

Let us make this matter very clear lest anyone fall prey to misconceptions. Know that Allah I may act through a usual agent that we can call the outward cause, as for example when He makes the pasture grow through rain, and He may act through what is not usually His agent, and in this case we have what we call miracles, or He may act without any agent, or any cause whatsoever. We do not say that water is wet due to any innate power it has, or because that is its nature, just as we do not say that fire burns because of its innate power, or because that is its nature, and just as we do not say the sky is blue because of its innate power or because that is its nature. No, we insist that they do not have any power to be wet, to burn, or to be blue, nor is that their nature; rather, we say that if Allah I, empowers them to be wet, to burn, or to be blue they are so, others not. Indeed, He

has made fire cool for Ibràhám, and on the Day of Doom He will make the seas ignite and the sky red like rose as the Qur'an informs us. We the Ashà'irah and the Màturádiyah, who truly represent the main and orthodox community of Islam, insist that not an atom moves except according to His will and knowledge, at His command and upon being empowered by Him.

In his commentary on the 54th *ayah* of *Surah al-A'ràf,* cited above, Imam al-Nasafá opted to interpret *istiwà* as *istaulà* which means "took control." He answered the objections of some that this interpretation is not appropriate because Allah Ì controls all things by pointing out that since the Throne is the greatest and most exalted thing in creation, His taking control of the rest of the creation is understood by His taking control of the Throne. He also rejected the interpretation of the anthropomorphists that *istiwà* means *istiqràr,* which means "ascended," since Allah Ψ existed before the creation of the Throne when place did not exist; therefore, He must be know as He was then because [He does not undergo any change, for] change is an attribute of created things. Then he referred to what is reported of Imam Màlik (the report we are in the process of discussing in this article) attributing the same report (similar in meaning though with a different wording) to Abu Äanáfah, al-Äasan al-Baãrá.

Al-istiwà on the Throne is mentioned in six places in the Qur'an: (7:54), (10:3), (20:5), (25:59), (32:4), and (57:4). We have mentioned four of these texts. It is highly significant that Allah Ì always mentioned that he made *istiwà* after mentioning that He created the heavens and the earth. As we saw in the at the end of the 54th *ayah* of *Surah al-A'ràf* that I cited above, and this *àyah* is the first place where Allah Ϋ mentions *istiwà* in the Qur'an, that He says:

(ألا لهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالأَمْرُ تَبَارَكَ اللهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ)

> Verily, His alone is the creation and its administration. Ever blessed is Allah, the Lord of All Things.

Allah Ϋ is emphasizing that not only did He create the universe, but that He and He alone governs it. If one recalls that most of the Arabs at the outset of the mission of the Prophet ρ were idol-worshippers, polytheists (*mushrikân*) who believed that Allah Ì had associates on earth who managed independently many affairs on earth, one can better see the appropriateness of Allah's addressing them in the imagery of imperial majesty which depicted an all-powerful sovereign administering every affair in creation from a throne on high wider than the heavens and the earth (as the *ayah* of the Throne declares), for such imagery was preeminently effective in driving home the fact that Allah Ψ was the sole administrator of affairs in heaven and on earth. How strange it is that people have appeared who, while they consider themselves Arabs and vaunt that the profound understanding of the Arabic language is their birthright, they have interpreted the metaphors of majesty in terms that demean the almighty sovereign and imply that He is

predicated by limit and imperfection. High, high and hallowed is He beyond the blasphemous things they ascribe to Him!

Another thing that should we kept in mind is that when the *‘ulamà’* advance this interpretation, or some other suitable interpretation, they do so tentatively not insisting definitely, for they advance interpretations in the understanding that ultimately the real meaning of this and all *mutashàbihàt* is known only to Allah Y . Thus even in *ta’wál* we have *tafwáç;* and in *tafwáç* we also have *ta’wál* because in the first case we leave the final decision to Allah I and in the second we avert the term from its literal meaning. This very important point was first brought to my attention by Isà Abd Allah Mani‘, Director of Islamic Trusts in Dubai, who was ever wont to emphasize it.

Much of the foregoing discussion has been gleaned from the book *al-Baràhán al-Sàti‘ah* by Salàmah al-Azzàmá (d. 1376 / 1956) of Egypt as quoted in *al-Qaul al-Wajáh fá Tanzáhi Allah ‘an’l-Tashbáh* (pp. 56-59). The theological explanations of points that came up are according to Màturádá school of Theology in which I have received my first initiation under *‘ulamà* from Afghanistan.

Having expounded the foregoing essential principles, let us return to examine the statement of Imam Màlik that al-Baihaqá reported from Màlik’s disciple Wahb ibn Abd Allah that I quoted at the outset. Notice that Imam Màlik affirmed that what Allah Ψ said about himself in the Qur’an in the 5th *ayah* of *Surah Åà Hà,* namely, *al-raämàn ‘alà’l-‘arshi istiwà,* is true; however, he implicitly denied that the literal meaning was implied when he said that one does not ask how because *how* does not apply to him since He the creator of time and space is beyond time and space and limit and direction and movement and change. While we affirm that He exists; or rather we insist that His existence is necessary, and that His non-existence is impossible, yet we maintain that we cannot imagine the nature of His existence, for He is beyond all comparison as the Qur’an declares: *laysa ka mithlihá shay’un;* that is, “Nothing is like Him.” His dissimilarity with His creation is absolute. Consider that while we might say that red and blue, for example, are dissimilar, they are not dissimilar in an absolute sense, for both are colours, both are accidents which occur in substances, and most importantly both are contingent and originated phenomena. There are no two things in this world or the next that are not similar in some respect; Allah Ψ, however, is not similar to anything in any way.

Since the question revealed that the one who was asking it imagined some literal meaning and some physical attribute for Allah I, Imam Màlik was taken aback and bowed his head thinking about how best to answer this person who had come with a hitherto unheard of deviation and he was visibly perturbed for sweat poured out of him. When he raised his head and uttered his immortal formula, he succinctly denied all anthropomorphic implications of the verse and denounced the person as an evil deviant innovator. While this is all quite obvious, the present-day *Äashawáyah* misrepresent the account pretending that the questioner meant to deny that Allah Ψ made *istiwà* literally, that is, that he physically ascended on the Throne, or in others words sat down on it, or hovered over it. However, this is clearly a misinterpretation, and it is against the sense and wording of the account. Don’t you see

that if the questioner meant to deny that Allah Ψ made *istiwà* literally and physically, and that Imam Màlik maintained that the literal meaning was implied, he would have answered him by saying that *istiwà* means that He ascended literally on or over the Throne, or sat down on it, or over it. However, we see that he emphasized that while what Allah I says about Himself is true whatever it might mean, and that the question *how* does not apply to Him since He does not share with His creatures any of those *their* qualities about which one may and does ask *how, where, when,* and *why*. He was in effect exemplifying the *madhhab* called *tafwáç* that involves first of all recognizing that the literal meaning of the *mutashàbihàt* cannot possibly be implied and secondly consigning its interpretation to Allah I. It is most ironic that such a transparently transcendent text from Imam Màlik has become the slogan of the goons of anthropomorphism in the belief that his statement illustrates their unholy and deviant persuasion.

Next al-Baihaqá reported another account of the incident that transpired with Imam Màlik with a full chain of narration by way of Yàäyà ibn Yaäyà ibn Bakár al-Nisàbârá (142-227 = 759-840), who was an imam in *hadith*:

> كنّا عند مالك بن أنس, فجاء رجل, فقال: يا أبا عبد الله, الرحمن على العرش استوى, فكيف استوى؟ قال: فأطرق مالك رأسه حتى علاه الرحضاء, ثمّ قال: الاستواء غير مجهول, والكيف غير معقول, والإيمان به واجب, السؤال عنه بدعة, وما أراك إلا مبتدعا. فأمر به أن يخرج.[41]

> We were with Màlik ibn Anas when a man came and said: "O Abâ 'Abd Allah, al-Raämàn made *istiwà* on the throne. How did he make *istiwà?*" Màlik bowed his head [in thought] and sweat appeared on him, then he said: "*Istiwà* is not unknown [that is, it is known to be a fact whatever it means because it was mentioned in the Qur'an], but *how* [in respect of Allah I] is not something we can conceive [since He is other than whatever we imagine Him to be[42]]. Moreover, it is obligatory for us to believe in it [whatever it might mean] and asking about its meaning is a deviant innovation (*bid'ah*), and I think that you are a deviant innovator." Then he ordered him to be put out.

After reporting the above, al-Baihaqá added that a similar answer was reported from the distinguished teacher of Màlik, al-Rabá'ah ibn Abá 'Abd al-Raämàn (d. 136 h. / 753), who earned the nickname al-Rabá'ah al-Ra'y for his prowess in making inferences on existing texts when no texts existed on some issue. Al-Baihaqá reported with a chain of narration up to Ãàliä ibn Muslim that he said:

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[41] الأسماء والصفات, ص 516.

[42] I refer to the truth which I have already discussed; namely, while we can comprehend what is necessary, possible, or impossible for Allah, we cannot imagine the nature of His reality and existence.

سئل ربيعة الرأي عن قول الله تبارك وتعالى (الرحمن على العرش استوى) كيف استوى؟ قال الكيف مجهول والاستواء غير معقول ويجب علىّ وعليك الإيمان بذلك كله.[43]

> Rabá‘ah al-Ra’y was asked about His word, blessed and exalted is He, “The Merciful made *istiwà,”* how did he make *istiwà?* He said, “How He did is unknown, and the *istiwà* is inconceivable, while belief in it is mandatory for me and you.

Notice Rabá‘ah states that the “how” of *istiwà* is unknown; it is unknown just as the nature of Allah’s existence is unknown, and just as how Allah I creates is unknown because it is transcendent attribute either of being or act. But since al-Rabá‘ah also says that *istiwà* is inconceivable, we understand that he means that the literal meanings of *istiwà* that imply the concomitants of bodies are inconceivable, otherwise, he contradicts himself. As for his insistence on the obligation to believe it, while knowing that the literal meanings are inconceivable, that is nothing but *tafwáç* (that is, consigning the meaning to Allah Ψ while rejecting the anthropomorphic literal meanings).

Thereafter al-Baihaqá reported what is attributed to Sufyàn ibn ‘Uyainah (d. 198 h. / 814; Makkah), an illustrious *muäaddith* from Kâfah who settled in Makkah. Ibn Äajr al-‘Asqalàná calls him *thiqah, äàfiæ, faqáh, imam* which is about as high a grading as a *muäaddith* can get. In fact one who is accorded such a rank is one about whom we don’t even ask; rather, he is the one whom we ask about the others. He was one of the important shaikhs of Imam Shàfi‘á, and his *hadith*s figure in the six standard collections of *hadith*. Here follows his famous statement which al-Baihaqá reports with chain of narration:

كل ما وصف الله تعالى من نفسه في كتابه, فتفسيره تلاوته والسكوت عليه.[44]

> However Allah, the Exalted, describes Himself, the interpretation of that is [simply] to read it and be quiet.

Here again we have clear-cut *tafwáç.* Don’t you see that if the meaning was clear there was no need to be silent? For example, if Allah Y says He is the creator, that is one, that He will resurrect the dead and so on, we take that literally and we can say what that means. What are those texts that we have to be quiet about and why? Obviously, they are the *mutashàbihàt* (ambivalent texts) that outwardly imply that Allah I shares some originated, contingent and imperfect attribute with His creatures. We have to silent about them because we know that there literal meaning is not implied here, but since we must believe whatever Allah Y, the Lord of Truth, and His truthful prophet say about Him, we read it

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[43] الأسماء والصفات, ص 516.
[44] الأسماء والصفات, ص 516.

and accept it consigning its meaning to He who knows all things. While this is quite clear and straightforward, the Äashawáyah have always pretended what this and similar statements attributed to the early Muslims (*al-salaf*) means is that we acknowledge that the outward, literal, and physical meaning is implied and we don't dispute that. Obviously, that cannot be the case; otherwise there was no need to treat these ambivalent texts in any special way by simply reading them and remaining silent about them.

Next al-Baihaqá sited the saying attributed to Ibn Khuzaimah that Allah I made *istiwà* without any "how" being implied which idea in Arabic is expressed as *bálà kaif.* He said that many similar statements have been attributed to the *salaf* including Imam al-Shàfi'á and Aämad ibn Äanbal. Although the half-educated immediately jump to the conclusion that what he meant is that Allah Ψ literally ascended in some way, the particulars of which are unclear. However, the term is actually another way of expressing *tafwáç* because it means that the question "how" just as the questions "why," "where," "when," and "what" do not apply to His *istiwà* because these are questions that are asked of bodies, and since the Qur'an and first principles require that Allah Y is neither a body nor does He have any of the attributes of body, such questions cannot be asked of Him nor do they apply to Him.

Imam al-Kauthará (d. 1371 / 1952; Cairo), who annotated the first edition of al-Baihaqá's *al-Asmà' wa 'l-Ãifàt,* and who was one of the greatest *'ulamà'* to have lived in the fourteenth century of Islam, and a fearless defender of traditional Islamic beliefs, made an annotation to Sufyàn al-'Uyainah's statement that we quoted above. In this annotation he quoted several extremely perspicuous and precious statement of Ibn Äazm (d. 456 /1064; Andalusia). The *'ulamà'* recognize one thing about Ibn Äazm and that is that when he says there is consensus on a question, there *is* consensus because he was very stingy in conceding consensus for he would not accept any consensus but the consensus of the Companions. Furthermore, as al-Kauthará intimated, Ibn Äazm is one of those who claimed to speak in the name of the *salaf,* and those who nowadays always harangue about following the *salaf* give Ibn Äazm's opinions great credence; therefore, since in this instance at least he certainly does speak on behalf of the *salaf,* I thought it most instructive to quote him in full:

> قال ابن حزم (وهو ممن يتكلم باسم السلف) قول الله تعالى يجب حمله على ظاهره ما لم يمنع من حمله على ظاهره نصّ آخر أو إجماع أو ضرورة حس, وقد علمنا أن كل ما كان في مكان, فإنه شاغل لذلك المكان ومالئ له ومتشكل بشلكه, ولا بدّ من أحد الأمرين ضرورة, وعلمنا أن ما كان في مكان فإنه متناه بتناهي مكانه وهو ذو جهات ست أو خمس متناهية في مكانه وهذه كله صفات الجسم اهـ ثم قال:إن الأمة أجمعت على أنه لا يدعو أحد فيقول يا مستو ارحمني, ولا يسمى ابنه عبد المستوي اهـ ثم قال إن معنى قوله تعالى على العرش استوى أنه فعل فعله في العرش وهو انتهاء خلقه إليه, فليس بعد العرش شيء, والعرش نهاية جرم المخلوقات الذي ليس خلفه خلاء ولا ملاء, ومن أنكر أن يكون للعالم نهاية من المساحة والزمان والمكان, فقد لحق بقول الدهرية وفارق الإسلام اهـ ثم ردّ على القائلين بالمكان وختم كلامه بقوله فإنه لا يكون في مكان إلا ما كان جسما أو عرضا في جسم, هذا الذي لا يجوز سواه, ولا

يتشكل في العقل والوهم غيره البتة, وإذا انتفى أن يكون الله عز وجل جسما أو عرضا, فقد انتفى أن يكون في مكان أصلا وبالله نتأيد اهـ فليعتبر بقول ابن حزم هذا أدعياء السلف من مشبّهة العصر.[45]

> Ibn Äazm (who was a person wont to speak in the name of the *salaf* said: "One is required to take Allah's word, exalted is He, literally as long as there is no text, or consensus, or empirical necessity, stops us from doing that. We know that everything that is in a place occupies that space and fills it and assumes its shape. One of the two things has to be. We know that whatever is in a place has to be limited by the limits of that place, as it has to be in limited by a finite limit in the six or five directions in its space, and these are the attributes of bodies." Then he said: "The *ummah* is agreed that no one should say 'O, He who has ascended, have mercy on me'! just as no one should name his son 'Slave of the One Who Ascended.'" Then he said: "Truly, the meaning of His saying, exalted is He, 'He made *istiwà* on the Throne' is that He acted in some way on the Throne; namely, He ended His creation with it, for there is nothing after the Throne which is the end of creation; there is nothing after it, neither space, nor void. Anybody who denies that the creation has a finite limit in distance and time and space joins the materialists and leaves Islam." Then he refuted those who insist that Allah occupies space and he ended his discourse saying: "Nothing can be in space except what is a body or an accident [what occurs in a substance like heat, color and so on] in a body; there is no other possibility, for neither reason nor imagination can conceive of another possibility at all. Since it is concluded that Allah is neither a body nor an accident, it is concluded that He cannot occupy space absolutely. And Allah is our help." So let those *claim* to follow the *salaf* [he refers here sarcastically to those who now call themselves Salafis] in our times likening Allah to His creatures [that is, the anthropomorphists] consider carefully this proclamation of Ibn Äazm.

Lastly, I would like to quote what al-Baihaqá reported about the supreme imam of the Muslims in the field of belief (*al-'aqádah*), Abâ 'l-Äasan al-Ash'ará (d. 324 / 936; Baghdad), concerning the meaning of *istiwà* on the Throne:

> وذهب أبو الحسن على بن إسماعيل الأشعري إلى أن الله تعالى جلّ ثناؤه فعل في العرش فعلا سمّاه استواء كما فعل في غيره فعلا سمّاه رزقا ونعمة أو غيرهما من أفعاله. ثم لم يُكيّف الاستواء إلا أنه جعل[ه] من صفات الفعل لقوله (ثم استوى على العرش) وثم للتراخي, والتراخي إنما يكون في الأفعال, وأفعال الله تعالى توجد بلا مباشرة منه إياها ولا حركة.[46]

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[45] الأسماء والصفات, ص 516, تعليق رقم (1).
[46] الأسماء والصفات, ص 517.

> Abâ ’l-Äasan ‘Alá ibn Ismà’ál al-Ash‘ará opined that Allah, great is His praise, executed an act on His Throne which he called *istiwà* just as He executed other acts on other things which He called provision, beneficence and other acts other than them. So al-Ash‘ará did not make the *istiwà* a physical attribute (*takyáf*), rather, he made it an attribute of divine act (*ãifàt al-fi‘l*) because of His word “Then he made *istiwà* on the Throne,” and the word *thumma* (then) indicates that that act happened afterwards, and being afterwards is something that involves the divine act [not the attributes of being, and more precisely the effects of His eternal act], and the acts [that is, the effects of the eternal act] of Allah occur without His undertaking them directly and without any movement [on the part of Allah].

What al-Ash‘ará is getting at here is what I already explained above [Cross-Reference] where I discussed the nature of the divine act and the difference between the divine act and the divine attributes. I explained that Allah I acts in eternity, and while His pre-eternal act is one and indivisible, the effects of His pre-eternal act are numerous, and successive. That is what al-Ash‘ará referred to when he said that He does not undertake His acts directly by which he meant the effects of His eternal act because as I mentioned, quoting the Màliká *muäaddith* and *faqáh,* Ibn al-‘Arabá (d. 543 / 1148; Fez), that the effects of Allah Ψ eternal act manifest in other than Him. Although He is neither subject to motion, nor even stillness, He moves all things. Al-Ash‘ará’s argument is that since the *istiwà* took place in time as the use of the word “then” indicates, it is known that *istiwà* is an effect of Allah’s eternal act. And Allah I, who is beyond all imperfection, knows best.

Imam Abâ Äanáfah Declares Allah I Free from Physically Sitting on the Throne

‘Abd al-Ghaná al-Maidàná al-Ghunaimá (d. 1298 / 1881; Damascus) quoted a statement of Abâ Äanáfah in Abâ Äanáfah’s extant booklet *al-Waãáyah:*

> قال الإمام [في الوصية]: نقر بأن الله على العرش استوى من غير أن يكون له حاجة إليه واستقرار عليه وهو الحافظ للعرش وغير العرش, فلو كان محتاجا لما قدر على إيجاد العالم وتدبيره كالمخلوق ولو كان محتاجا إلى الجلوس والقرار, فقبل خلق العرش أين كان الله تعالى, فهو منزه عن ذلك علوا كبيرا اهـ[47]

> We declare [Abâ Äanáfah says] that Allah made *istawà* without having any need of it. He not only maintains the Throne, but all other things as well. Indeed, if He had experienced any need, He would have been incapable of originating the world and managing it, sharing such incapability with all

[47] شرح العقيدة الطحاوية للعبد الغاني الغنيمي, دار الفكر, دمشق, مصور من الطبعة الثانية 1412هـ/1992م, ص 74.

> originated things. If He was in need of sitting down, or of a resting-place, or of fixity, then where was He, exalted is He, before He originated the Throne? Indeed, He transcends all that, and is far, far beyond it [that is, beyond physically sitting on the Throne, and all such anthropomorphic absurdities].[48]

Al-Ghunaimá commented on the above passage of Abâ Äanáfah saying:

> فانظر كيف أجراه على ظاهر التنزيل من غير تأويل مع التنزيه عما لا يليق بذات الجليل وهذه طريقة السلف وهم أسلم والتأويل طريقة الخلف وقد قيل إنها أحكم.[49]

> Observe how Abâ Äanáfah conveys the express text of the revelation without interpreting it, while at the same time maintaining the requirement of transcendence (*tanzáh*), and repudiating all attribution to Him of what does not befit His Magnificent Essence. This is the way of the early predecessors (*al-salaf*), and it is a safer (*aslam*) way; whereas, the way of the later *ulamà'* (*al-khalaf*) is to interpret (*ta'wál*)—some say that the way of interpretation is wiser (*aäkam*).[50]

The imam Sa'd al-Dán al-Taftàzàná (d. 793 / 1390; Samarqand), a universally acclaimed expert in beliefs and all the intellectual sciences,[51] and a follower of both the Hanafi and Maturádá Madhhab[52], mentioned in his commentary *al-'Aqà'id al-Nasafáyah,* an authoritative text on belief of the Maturádá Madhhab:

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[48] شرح العقيدة الطحاوية, ص 74.

[49] شرح العقيدة الطحاوية, ص 74.

[50] شرح العقيدة الطحاوية, ص 74.

[51] 'Abd al-Äayy al-Laknawá mentioned in his *al-Fawà'id al-Baháyah* (Beirut, Dàr al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), p. 135, that al-Kafawá al-Râmá (d. about 990 / 1583; Istanbul) mentioned in his encyclopedia of the biography of Hanafi *'ulamà'* that eyes had not seen the likes of al-Taftàzàná, and that he was *the* Master, the man of undisputed fame.

[52] The question of which *madhhab* al-Taftàzàná actually followed has long been a subject of controversy. The fact that he undertook to comment on *al-'Aqà'id al-Nasafáyah*, which is one of the most important summaries (*mutân*) of the *Maturádá madhhab,* and the fact that he wrote *Sharä Talkháã al-Jàmi' al-Ãaghár,* and *al-Fatãwà al-Äanafáyah,* which are works on Hanafi *fiqh,* and the fact he wrote a supercommentary on *al-Talwáh,* a work of Hanafi principles of *fiqh,* and a commentary on a famous Hanafi text of inheritance law called *al-Siràjáyah,* are facts which strongly support his being Hanafi and *Maturádá*. 'Abd al-Äayy al-Laknawá **(*Tarjumah*)** quoted al-Åaäåàwá who quoted the Hanafi Imam Ibn Nujaim to the effect that al-Taftàzàná assumed the leadership of the Hanafi Madhhab in his day and served as a Hanafi *qàÇá.* In addition to the above-mentioned works, he mentioned that he completed the unfinished commentary on *al-Hidàyah* by al-Sarâjá. Al-Laknawá further mentioned that Mulla 'Alá al-Qàrá (d. 1014 h. / 1606; Makkah) included a biography of al-Taftàzàná in his dictionary of the biography of Hanafi *'ulamà'*: *al-Åabaqàt al-Äanafáyah.* (See al-Laknawá, *al-Fawà'id al-Baháyah,* p. 135.) Al-Taftàzàná's books, *Sharä al-'Aqà'id al-Nasafáyah,* and *al-Talwáä* have been required texts in religious schools (*madàris*) in the lands of the Hanafis for centuries. His major work on *Kalàm,* his book *al-Maqàãid* is still an authoritative reference book for *Màturádá 'ulamà'.* Until today teachers depend on these texts to teach their students the principles of belief and the principles of *fiqh,* which are called the two foundations (*al-aãlain*) since they are the essence of the *Sharà'ah.* Is it reasonable to presume that they could have depended on his works for so long without him being a Hanafi? One of the

الأدلة القطعية قائمة على التنزيهات, فيجب أن يُفوَّض علم النصوص إلى الله تعالى على ما هو دأب السلف إيثارا للطريق الأسلم أو تؤول تأويلات صحيحة على ما اختاره المتأخرين دفعا لمطاعن الجاهلين وجذبا بضبع القاصرين سلوكا للسبيل الأحكم.[53]

> Conclusive proofs (*al-adillat al-qaå'áyah*) establish the absolute and imperative necessity of maintaining the pure transcendence of God. Therefore, it is necessary that either we should leave the knowledge of the meaning of the [ambiguous] texts[54] to Allah, exalted is He, as was the custom of the *salaf* [the first three generations of Islam] preferring the safer way (*al-åaráq al-aslam*), or we should interpret them in a correct way as is the custom of the later *'ulamà'* in order to refute the propaganda of the ignorant [an allusion to the Äashawáyah] and take simpleminded souls by the arm in a way which is safer (*al-åaráq al-aäkam*) [for the simpleminded].[55]

Ramadàn Effendá, who has a supercommentary on al-Taftàzàná's commentary that we have cited above, say that the reason the way of the *salaf* was safer was that without venturing any interpretation, one whose mind did not have the acumen to grasp the subtleties of interpretation and figurative use of speech was safe from the possibility of making a wrong or unacceptable interpretation and thus falling into deviation or uneasiness in one's mind. The reason the way of the later *'ulamà'* is wiser is that is more effective in delivering the common people from the danger of imagining Allah Ψ in an anthropomorphic way. I once gave a series of lectures on

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leading contemporary Islamic research scholars, and a specialist in the biography of Hanafi *'ulamà'*. Although al-Laknawá himself considered al-Taftàzàná to be Shafi the evidence is against him. 'Abd al-Fattaä Abâ Ghuddah mentioned in a note to the work *Iqàmat al-Äujjah,* **(REFERENCE)** p. 16: "What is clear is that he [al-Taftàzàná] had masterly proficiency in both *madhhabs.* Neither was he a Shafi in the usual way of Shafi's, nor was he Hanafi in the usual way of the Hanafi's. However, after making [extensive] researches in most of the sources [of biography] and after referring to his own works it seems that he was Hanafi. However, Allàh knows best."

Having said all that, we can add that if the fact of the matter were that al-Taftàzàná were actually a Shafi, his case serves to prove our point even more because then we have an example of a Shafi who not only respected Hanafi and Màturádá scholarship, but mastered it and wrote highly regared texts in the field. That shows that the two *madhhabs* were *sister-madhhabs,* existing together in complete harmony, and tolerating a large degree of give and take.

[53] شرح العقائد للتفتازاني, دمشق, بغير ذكر المطبع بتحقيق محمد عدنان درويش ومراجعة أديب الكلاس, ص97.

[54] Ramadàn Effendá mentioned here in his commentary on *Sharä al-'Aqà'id,* known as *Äàshiyah RamaÇàn Efendá* (Multan, Pakistan; Maktabah Imdàdáyah, n.d.), p.113, that the texts referred to here are those that outwardly imply that Allah has a direction or limbs. That is obvious from the context, since if the texts were not ambiguous there would be no need to make *tafwáç,* or *ta'wál.*

[55] Quoted in the supercommentary of *Sharä al-'Aqà'id al-Nasafáyah* by RamaÇàn Efendá known as *Äàshiyah RamaÇàn Efendá* (Multan, Pakistan; Maktabah Imdàdáyah, n.d.), p.113. See also Sa'd al-Dán al-Taftàzàná, *Sharä al-'Aqà'id al-Nasafáyah*, (Syrian edition with no name of publisher or date edited by Muäammad 'Adnàn Darwásh, and checked by Professor Adáb al-Kallàs of Aleppo), p.97. *Sharä al-'Aqà'id al-Nasafáyah* is a required text of study in the religious schools (*madàris*) of Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, and Turkey, and also in Azhàr University, Cairo.

basic *‘aqádah,* transcendence and anthorpomorphism. After I had covered considerable emphasizing that we cannot imagine the nature of Allah’s existence and that whatever we imagine him to be, He is other than that. A person in the audience was puzzled. He asked me, “What about the *hadith* of the slave girl”? He meant the *hadith* that I will discuss in the next section in which in one version of the *hadith* the Prophet asked her “Where is Allah”? I told him that we cannot take his words here in their outward sense since the outward sense contradicts first principles and the explicit texts of the Qur’an. Then I mentioned to him several of the interpretations that the *‘ulamà’* had given for this *hadith*. When I did that, his face changed showing now his obvious satisfaction. I told the audience, this incident shows as why exactly it is necessary to indulge in interpretations in our times: I have spoken for hours expounding pure transcendence but this fellow was not able to abide by the requirements of *tafwáç* and he assumed what he is not permitted to assume over the *Hadith* of the Slave Girl*;* however, as soon as I proffered him an acceptable interpretation, the matter became clear and he was satisfied and got back on course. The *muäaddith,* the commentator of the Qur’an, the *faqáh,* Badr al-Dán Ibn Jamà‘ah (d. 733 / 1333; Cairo) expressed this need in his excellent book on the *mutashàbihàt Áçàh al-Dalál Fá Qaå ‘ Äujjaji Ahli ‘l-Ta ‘åál* when he said:

> ومن الأئمة من أوّل ذلك بما يليق بجلال الربّ تبارك وتعالى, ورجحه طائفة من المحققين أيضا, وقد بيّنا أن المخرّج إلى ذلك حدوث البدع وظهورها بين المسلمين وأن سكون الخواطر على اعتقاد ما يليق بجلال الله تعالى أولى من التعرّض لوسواس الاحتمالات المرجوحة الممتنعة.[56]

> Among the imams there were those who interpreted that [the *mutashàbihàt*] in a way that befitted the majesty of the Lord, blessed and holy is He. Indeed some of those who were *muäaqqiqân* (thorough and scrupulous investigators who document everything they assert) preferred this method [just as some of them preferred the method of *tafwáç*]. We have explained [elsewhere] that the call for that [*ta’wál*] was the appearance of deviant innovation (*bida‘*) and its spread among the Muslims, for being at settled with what befits the transcendent majesty of Allah, exalted is He, is better than being prone to the unsettling influence of dubious or illegitimate interpretations.

Consider that never in the history of Islam has there been such an extensive and prolonged campaign of anthropomorphic propaganda. If ever there was a need for *ta’wál* it is now, and especially in the West where the dark clouds of abysmal ignorance have gathered thick.

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[56] إيضاح الدليل في قطع حجج أهل التشبيه والتعطيل لبدر الدين ابن جماعة, دار السلام, القاهرة, الطبعة الأولى 1410هـ/ 1990م, ص 152.

Al-Ghunaimá quoted a statement of Ibn Daqáq al-'Ád (d. 702 / 1302; Cairo), a Shafi imam and famous *muäaddith*, in which he advocated the resort to *ta'wál* with the condition that that interpretation be standard Arabic usage, and he also quoted Ibn al-Humàm (d. 861 / 1457; Cairo), a Hanafi *muäaddith* and *faqáh* and a specialist in *kalàm* (belief), who recommended that we resort to *ta'wál* only if the circumstances at large indicated that there was a real need for it:

وقد توسط ابن دقيق العيد فقال: نقبل التأويل إذا كان المعنى الذي أول به مفهوما من تخاطب العرب ونتوقف فيه إذا كان بعيدا, وجرى على التوسط ابن الهمام بين أن تدعو الحاجة لخلل في فهم العوام وأن لا تدعو الحاجة لذلك المرام بحسب اختلاف المقام.[57]

Ibn Daqáq al-'Ád took a middle course, for he said: "We accept interpretation (*ta'wál*) if the interpretation is feasible and compatible with the usage of the Arabs; whereas, we refrain from interpretation (*ta'wál*) if the interpretation is far-fetched." Ibn al-Humàm also advocated a middle course wherein he permitted *ta'wál* (interpretation) when there was any necessity to compensate for the inability of the common people to understand *tafwáç* (entrusting the meaning to Allah while maintaining divine transcendence), and consequently were in the danger of falling into anthropomorphism (*tajsám,* or *tashbáh*), but discouraged *ta'wál* (interpretation) when there was no such need for that under the circumstances.

Let us look more carefully at Ibn al-Humàm's position as illustrated in his book on *'aqádah* called *al-Musàyarah:*

الأصل الثامن أنه تعالى استوى على العرش مع الحكم بأنه ليس كاستواء الأجسام على الأجسام من التمكن والمماسة والمحاذاة, بل بمعنى يليق به هو سبحانه أعلم به وحاصله وجوب الإيمان بأنه استوى على العرش مع نفي التشبيه, فأما كون المراد أنه استيلاؤه على العرش جائز الإرادة إذ لا دليل على إرادته عينا, فالواجب عينا ما ذكرنا, وإذا خيف على العامة عدم فهم الاستواء إذا لم يكن بمعنى الاستيلاء إلا باتصال ونحوه من لوازم الجسمية, و إن لا ينفوه فلا بأس بصرف فهمهم إلى الاستيلاء, فإنه قد ثبت إطلاقه وإرادته لغة في قوله قد استوى بشر على العراق وقوله فلما علونا واستوينا عليهم جعلناهم مرعى لنسر وطائر وعلى نحو ما ذكرنا كل ما ورد مما ظاهره الجسمية في الشاهد كالأصبع والقدم واليد, فإن اليد وكذا الأصبع وغيره صفة له تعالى لا بمعنى الجارحة بل على وجه يليق به وهو سبحانه أعلم به وقد تؤول اليد والأصبع بالقدرة والقهر واليمين في قوله صلى الله عليه وسلم الحجر يمين الله في الأرض على التشريف والإكرام لما ذكرنا من صرف فهم العامة عن الجسمية وهو ممكن أن يراد ولا يجزم بأرادته خصوصا على قول أصحابنا إنها من المتشابهات وحكم المتشابه انقطاع رجاء معرفة المراد منه في هذه الدار وإلا لكان قد عُلم.[58]

The eighth principle is that He, the Exalted, made *istiwà'* on the Throne with the provision that that *istiwà'* is not like the *istiwà'* [ascending, mounting, and so on] of bodies in-

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[57] شرح العقيدة الطحاوية للغنيمي, ص 74.

[58] كتاب المسايرة في متن كتاب المسامرة بشرح المسايرة لكمال ابن أبي شريف, مصور من الطبعة الأولى 1317هـ إستنبول, ص30-35.

volving the occupying of space and touching and being opposite; rather, with a meaning that befits Him that He, holy is He, knows better. In short, it is obligatory to believe that He made *istiwà'* on the Throne while denying all anthropomorphic implications. The idea that the meaning of *istiwà'* here is "to take control" is a only a possibility since there is not definite proof that that is what is actually meant; therefore, we are obligated to do as I said. However, if it is feared that unless the laymen take *istiwà'* to mean "to seize control," they will not be able to resist understanding it except with the idea of contact and other such concomitants of bodies," then there is nothing wrong with letting them understand that it means "to seize control." For it is confirmed that *istiwa'* has been so used in Arabic literature in the words [of the poet] "Bishr conquered (*istiwà*) Iraq…" and also in the words [of another poet] "Then when we got the better of them and conquered them (*istawainà*), we made them pasture for the vultures and the birds." Similar to what I have mentioned [that is, in respect of believing in the ambiguous text while disbelieving all anthropomorphic implications of it] are all other texts which have come [in the holy law] in which the outward meaning implies corporealness [that is, the attributes of bodies, or say: the outward meaning has an anthropomorphic implication] such as the finger, the foot, and the hand. For the hand and also the finger and other things [mentioned in the Qur'an or *hadith*] are His attributes (*ãifàt*), exalted is he, but not with the meaning of a limb [or any other anthropomorphic implication], but rather with a meaning which befits Him about which He, holy is He, is better informed. Sometimes the hand and the finger might be interpreted as power and domination, and [similarly] the hand in the Prophet's saying "The Stone [that is, the Black Stone of the Ka'bah] is the right hand of Allah on the earth" might be interpreted as [a manner of speech to express] the honor and nobleness [of the Black Stone]; [they might be so interpreted] for the reasons I have given; namely, to avert the minds of the laymen from imagining any anthropomorphic implications. For these *are* possible meanings; however, we must not declare definitively that these are the intended meanings, especially according to the precept of our companions [that is, the *'ulamà'* of the Màturádá Madhhab] that they [the ambiguous texts we have mentioned and such similar ones] pertain to the *mutashàbihàt* [the ambiguous texts whose outward implies *tashbáh*], and the rule of the *mutashàbihàt* is that we despair of knowing their true meaning in this world [due to the prevailing interpretation of an *ayah* in Surah Ali 'Imràn that says that some of the Qur'an pertains to the *mutashàbihàt* and it declares "no one knows their interpretation but

> Allah.”]; otherwise [if we declare their meanings], it would mean that their meaning had been known.

Al-Kamàl ibn Abá Sharáf (d. 906 /1501; Jerusalem), a Shàfi‘á *‘alim* of prodigious learning, a specialist in the science of *kalàm* and also the principles of *fiqh*, wrote a commentary on Ibn al-Humàm’s *al-Musàyarah,* which we quoted above. In that commentary he thoroughly and expertly explained the relative merits of *tawál* and *tafwáç.* The name of his commentary is *al-Musàmarah.* I propose to cite at length his remarks on Ibn al-Humàm’s statement: “The tenth principle is that He, the Exalted, made *istiwà’* on the Throne” interpolating extensively in order to guide the uninitiated through some highly technical matters . After citing the passage I will go over the basic argument in simpler terms, *in shaa Allah* Ψ*:*

> وهذا الأصل معقود لبيان أنه تعالى غير مستقر على مكان كما قدمه صريحا في ترجمة أصول الركن الأول ونبه عليه هنا بالجواب عن تمسك القائلين بالجهة والمكان, فأن الكرامية يثبتون جهة العلو من غير استقرار على العرش والحشوية وهم المجسمة يصرحون بالاستقرار على العرش وتمسكوا بظواهر منها قوله تعالى (الرحمن على العرش استوى) وحديث الصحيحين ينزل ربنا كل ليلة الحديث, وأجيب عنه بجواب إجمالى هو كالمقدمة للأجوبة التفصيلية وهو أن الشرع إنما ثبت بالعقل, فإن ثبوته يتوقف على دلالة المعجزة على صدق المبلغ وإنما ثبتت هذه الدلالة بالعقل, فلو أتى الشرع بما يكذب العقل وهو شاهده لبطل الشرع والعقل معا. إذا تقرر هذا فنقول كل لفظ يرد في الشرع مما يسند إلى الذات المقدسة أو يطلق اسما أو صفة لها وهو مخالف للعقل ويسمّى المتشابه لا يخلو إما أن يتواتر أو ينقل آحادا, والآحاد إن كان نصا لا يحتمل التاويل قطعنا بافتراء ناقله أو سهوه أو غلطه, وإن كان ظاهرا فظاهره غير مراد, وإن كان متواترا فلا يتصوّر أن يكون نصا لا يحتمل التأويل, بل لا بد وأن يكون ظاهرا وحينئذ نقول الاحتمال الذي ينفيه العقل ليس مرادا منه ثم إن بقي بعد انتفائه احتمال واحد تعين أنه المراد بحكم الحال وإن بقي احتمالان فصاعدا, فلا يخلو إما أن يدل قاطع على واحد منهما أو لا, فإن دل حمل عليه, وإن لم يدل قاطع على التعيين فهل يعين بالنظر والاجتهاد دفعا للخبط عن العقائد أو لا خشية الإلحاد في الأسماء والصفات؟ الأول مذهب الخلف والثاني مذهب السلف.[59]

> This principle [that is, the eighth principle referred to above] has been invoked in order to make clear that Allah, the Exalted, does not occupy place as the author has already explicitly stated throughout [the discussion of] the principles in this first section (*rukn*) [the book is divided into five sections (*arkàn*) each with ten principles]. However, he has mentioned it again here in answer to argument of those who claim that Allah is predicated by direction and place [for they cite this *ayah* as a proof for their doctrine], for the Karràmáyah[60] attributed to Him the direction of *al-‘ulâw*

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[59] كتاب المسايرة في متن كتاب المسامرة بشرح المسايرة, ص 30-32.

[60] A deviant Islamic sect founded by Muäammad bin Karràm (d. 255 h. / 869; Jerusalem). He earned immortal notoriety by being the first person in the history of Islam to advocate an anthropomorphic perspective. Imam Abâ ‘l-Fatä al-Shahrastàná (d. 548 h. / 1153) mentioned him in his famous dictionary of Islamic sects. He listed his most outstanding deviation, the first of which he mentioned was that Muäammad ibn Karràm al-Sijzá opined that Allah is sitting on His Throne and that His being is predicated by a direction, and that He was in contact with the Throne from above. He also mentioned that he claimed that Allah

("high") without claiming that he ascends on the Throne; whereas, the Äashawáyah, and they are the anthropomorphists (*al-mujassimah*), state explicitly that He ascends the Throne. They cited the outward meanings [of certain texts of the Qur'an and the *sunnah*] as evidence, among the *àyah* "The Merciful *ascended* the Throne" (20:5), and the *hadith* mentioned in the Two Ãaääá's [that is, al-Bukhàrá and Muslim] "Our Lord *descends* every night to the lowest heaven…."[61] I will [first] give a general answer to their pretense as an introduction to the detailed answers: Reason authenticated the Holy Law (*al-shar'*), for its authentication depends on the inference that miracles testify to the truthfulness of the messenger, and this inference is made by reason. Therefore, if the Holy Law should declare something that contradicts reason, which is the Holy Law's [only] witness, reason and the Holy Law would both be invalidated. If that is affirmed, we can proceed to say that any text that appears in the Holy Law that predicates the holy divine being (*al-dhàt*) or is referred to as His attribute, or name, yet it contradicts reason, and is therefore referred to as a *mutashàbih* [singular of *mutashàbihàt* that I have already explained and translated as "ambiguous" or "ambivalent text"], will either be transmitted by innumerable chains of narration (*tawàtura*) [the entire Qur'an is *mutàwatur* as regards its transmission and so are those *hadith*s which have so many chains of narration that we cannot conceive that there was any possibility that the narrators conspired to perpetrate a forgery or that they all made the same mistakes], or it will be transmitted by few chains of narration (*àääd*) [*àääd* refers to whatever is not *mutawàtur*]. Now if what is transmitted to us by a small number of chains of narration (*àääd*) is categorical (*naãã*) [a technical term that refers to a text whose meaning is perfectly clear so that there is no possibility that other than the immediate obvious sense is implied] and does not allow for the possibility of any other interpretation, then we will be absolutely certain that the transmitter has lied, or forgotten, or made a mistake. However, if the text has an apparent outward meaning but is susceptible to other interpretation [that is to say it is a text that the *'âlamà'* referr to technically as *æàhir*], then we declare positively that the outward meaning is not implied. On the other hand, if the text [which is a *mutashàbih* and] which is *æàhir* is also *mutawàtur* [that is,

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was a *jauhar* (an indivisible unit of matter; it is the old philosophic idea of atom) and he said that He could move about, and change and descend [literally to the lowest sky]

[61] I will discuss the interpretation of this *hadith* presently (see page ?) in detail quoted what the great *'ulamà'* have said about it. For the time being it is enough to know that some versions of the *hadith* have "sends down" instead of "descends" with the object of "sends down" omitted, while others state explicitly that Allah "sends down an angel" and others "sends down a crier." Imam Màlik held that it means that Allah's mercy descends; his statement is an example of *ta'wál* on the part of the *salaf.*

its wording is absolutely authentic given that it has been transmitted so many sources, as for example, the Qur'an, for since so many have transmitted it we dispense with the details of the chain of narration, contrary to the case of *hadith*], then it is inconceivable that the text could be a *naãã* [that is, perfectly clear and not susceptible to any other interpretation other than the obvious] and not have any other interpretation, rather, any text which is *mutawàtur* [and outwardly attributes to Allah what contradicts reason] must be *æàhir* [that is, susceptible to another interpretation], and in that case, we declare that the interpretation that conflict with reason is not the intended meaning. Then if after discarding that meaning only one remains that is the intended meaning by force of circumstance; however, if two or more interpretations remain, then either some conclusive indication designates one of those several meanings or not. If it is so, then that meaning is the intended one; otherwise, if no conclusive indication designates one of the meanings then the question arises whether we may indulge in inference [based on inconclusive indications even if they are nonetheless reasonable (*æanniy*)] and *ijtihad* in order to keep from acting blindly in matters of belief [since if we have a text and don't assign any meaning to it, the mind is liable to stumble onto meanings in spite of itself even if it is not trained to delve in subtle and delicate such matters], or whether we should refrain for fear of deviating in the matter of the divine attributes and names. The first school of thought is that favored by the later *'ulamà'* (*al-khalaf*), while the second by the early *'ulamà'* (*al-salaf*).

Fatwà of Abâ Äanáfah in regards to the unbelief of those who maintain that Allah Y is on the Throne

In another article called *Khuåârah al-Qaul bá 'l-Jihati Façlan 'an al-Qaul bá 'l-Tajsám al-Ãaráä,* Imàm al-Kauthará quoted al-Baiyàçá (d. 1098 / 1687; Istanbâl)[62] in his *Ishàràt al-Maràm*:

قال أبو حنيفة: من قال لا أعرف ربي في السماء أم في الأرض فهو كافر, وكذا من قال إنه على العرش ولا أدري العرش أفي السماء أم في الأرض.[63] (جديد)

[62] Khair al-Dán al-Ziriklá (1396 / 1976; Cairo), who is the author of the biographical dictionary *al-A'làm* mentioned that al-Baiyàçá, who was a Hanafi *Qàçá* under the Ottoman Sultanate, wrote several books among them *Ishàràt al-Maràm 'an Ibàràt al-Imam,* a work in Hanafi *fiqh.* Al-Ziriklá mentioned that a manuscript copy of the work exists in the al-Azharáyah Library in Cairo under the name *Irshàd al-Maràm.* Judging from the title of the work which al-Ziriklá mentioned in the first instance, it is a work dealing specifically with the sayings of Abâ Äanáfah. He mentioned that the name of al-Baiyàçá is Aämad ibn Äasan ibn Sinàn al-Dán, and that he studied under the *ulamà'* of Istanbul, and served as a *qàçi* in Aleppo, then Brâsah, then Makkah, then Istanbul.

[63] مقالات الكوثري لمحمد زاهد الكوثري, دار شمسي, كراتشي, ص 291.

> Abâ Äanáfah said: Whoever says: “I do not know if my Lord is in the sky or on the earth;” he is an unbeliever; likewise, whoever said: “He is on the Throne, but I do not know if the Throne is in the sky or on the earth.”

Then al-Baiyàçá explained the reason for holding him to be an unbeliever (*kàfir*):

> ثم ذكر وجه إكفاره وقال: لكونه قائلا باختصاص البارئ تعالى بجهة وحيز, وكل ما هو مختص بالجهة والحيز فإنه محتاج محدث بالضرورة, وهو قول بالنقص الصريح في حقه تعالى, والقائل بالجسمية والجهة منكر وجود موجود سوى الأشياء التي يمكن الإشارة إليها حسا, فهم منكرون لذات الإله المنزه عن ذلك, فلزمهم الكفر لا محالة.[64] (جديد)

> That is because he holds that the Originator, hallowed is He, is qualified by location and direction; whereas, whatever is predicated by direction or location necessarily requires an originator [to originate for it that characteristic which it did not have previously]. Then to maintain that He requires an originator is to maintain outright that He is deficient, hallowed is He beyond what they ascribe to Him! Moreover, whoever maintains the materiality (*jismáyah*) of the Divinity, or predicates direction to Him, he denies the existence of everything except what one can point to physically; thus he denies the divine reality that transcends all materiality, and that denial necessarily signifies unbelief.

The Äashawáyah nowadays attribute to Abâ Äanáfah the following statement:

> من قال لا أعرف ربي في السماء أم في الأرض فقد كفر لأنّ الله يقول: {الرحمن على العرش استوى} وعرشه فوق سبع سموات...

> Whoever says “I do not know whether my Lord is in the sky or on earth” becomes an unbeliever because Allah says “Al-Raämàn made *istawà* on his Throne,” and His Throne is above the seven heavens….(NB: Source needed for this quote and the following information)

This statement is forged; its chain of narration contains Abâ Mutá‘ al-Balkhá, whose name is al-Äakam ibn ‘Abd Allah about whom al-Dhahabá said in his *al-Mughná fá’l-Du‘afà:* “They [that is, the *muäaddithân*] avoided him.” Al-Dhahabá reported in his *Mázàn al-I‘tidàl* that Yaäyà ibn Ma‘in said about him *laysa bi shay’in;* that is, “He’s nothing” and in another place he said: “He’s weak.” Al-Dhahabá also reported that Aämad said: “One must not report anything from him”; and he reported that al-Bukhàrá, Abâ Dàwâd, and al-Nisà’á, said that he was weak. Ibn Äajr al-‘Aãqalàná reported in his *Lisàn al-Mázàn* that Abâ Äàtim al-Ràzá said: “He was one of the *murjá’ah,* and a big liar”; Ibn Äajr closed his discussed about

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[64] مقالات الكوثري, ص 291.

him by saying that al-Dhahabá during his discussion of the narrator ‘Uthmàn ibn ‘Abd Allah al-’Umawá declared that Abâ Mutá‘that he forged a *hadith*.

The Äashawáyah are also vaunting that they are the people of *hadith* and they are the careful scrutinizers of the chains of narration that they report; what happened to them here? It is true the Hanafi’s report the first part of this statement; namely, “Whoever says ‘I do not know whether my Lord is in the sky or on earth’ becomes an unbeliever,” but they point out that the reason he becomes an unbeliever is because he imagines that Allah Ψ occupies place and has a direction and a limit and so on, for he holds that either He is in the sky, or He is on the earth and either belief is unbelief. Abâ Äanáfah in his *Fiqh al-Akbàr,* in his *al-Waãáyah,* and in what al-Åaääwá reports from him in the treatise known popularly as *al-‘Aqádah al-Åaääwáyah* makes it very clear that it is unbelief to attribute to Allah Ψ place, limit, direction, change and any other attribute of created things.

A refutation of the claim of the *mushabbihah* that Allah Ψ is separate from his creation but surrounding it

In consequence of insisting that Allah I is above his throne, but faced with dealing with the problems of claiming that Allah Ψ is in the creation which He created some *mushabbihah* especially in our times have resorted to an equally heretical and problematic doctrine that Allah I is outside His creation and above it surrounding it. One of my friends asked one of his teachers in one of the institutions of the pseudo-Salafis how Allah Ψ could be always be above His creation when being above is a relative matter. What is above us in this hemisphere is below those that are in the other hemisphere. That mindless teacher picked up something is his hand and closing his fist around it said, “Like this”! No doubt he did not realize that what he said was clear-cut unbelief for he necessarily and inescapably implied that Allah Ψ was a body surrounding the world. No doubt they will try to mitigate the manifest repugnance of their blasphemous doctrine by claiming that He is nonetheless outside the world. However, their snow job does not benefit them the least because they are stuck with maintaining that either He surrounds His creation and is touching it on all sides or that He surrounds it but is removed from it, and either doctrine requires them to admit that He has a limit and a direction and a position. In spite of their contradictory claim that He is beyond space, they maintain what necessarily requires Him to be contained by space and thus to have the attribute of bodies and all created things and that of course is unbelief.

Fatwà of Imàm al-Mutawallá and Imàm al-Nawawá concerning the unbelief of those who maintain that Allah Ψ is contiguous with His creation or separate from it

Imàm al-Nawawá (d. 676 / 1277; Nawà, Syria) and Imàm al-Mutawallá (d. 478 / 1087; Baghdad) both condemned anthropomorphism (*tajsám,* or *tashbáh*) as unbelief (*kufr*). Al-Nawawá in his book *Rauçah al-Âàlibán* said:

> وتحصل الردة بالقول الذي هو كفر, سواء صدر عن اعتقاد أو عناد أو اسنهزاء, هذا القول الجملى, وأما التفصيلى: فقال المتولى: من اعتقد قدم العالم, أو حدوث الصانع, أو نفي ما هو ثابت بالإجماع, ككونه عالما قادرا,أو نفي ما هو ثابت للقديم بالإجماع, أو أثبت ما هو منفي عنه بالإجماع, كالألوان, أو أثبت له الاتصال والانفصال, كان كافرا الخ[65] (جديد)

> Whoever believes that the world is eternal, or that the Maker is originated, or that the originator is originated (*äudâth al-Ãàni‘* / حدوث الصانع), or denies any attribute of the Eternal God about which attribute the *ulamà’* are agreed [that is, on which there is consensus–*ijmà‘* / إجماع], or attributes to Him what He transcends by the agreement of the *‘ulamà’,* such as colors, or believes that He is in contact with, or separate from His creation, or anything in it (*al-ittiãàl wa ’l-infiãàl* / الاتصال والانفصال), he is an unbeliever (*kàfir*).

It should be clear to the reader that the notion that Allah Y has an originated attribute, or that He is contiguous with, or separate from His creation which is condemned as unbelief in the *fatwà* above is typical of anthropomorphism (*tajsám,* or *tashbáh*). Thus the judgement that that doctrine is unbelief necessarily implies that anthropomorphism is unbelief. The reason that the doctrine of contiguity or separation is unbelief is that if we maintain that Allah I is contiguous with His creation, or separate from it, we necessarily imply that He has a limit and therefore a body. Both limit and body require a creator and someone to give it its particularity.

Ibn al-Jauzá the Hanbali denounces those Hanbalis who insist that Allah Y is separate from His creation

The fact that the notion that Allah I is contiguous with His creation or separate from it necessarily and undeniably implies the notion that He is possessed of body and substance was emphasised by Abâ ’l-Faraj ibn al-Jauzá (d. 597 /1201; Baghdad), a Hanbali Imàm in his book *Daf‘ Shubah al-Tashbáh* when he remonstrated with Ibn al-Zàghânná (d. 520 / 1126), one of the teachers of Ibn al-Jauzá and one of the anthropomorphist Hanbali’s, for insisting that Allah Y “has to be separate” and for insisting that Allah Ψ physically ascended the Throne. I will quote him at length including his discussion in refutation of those who insist that He is on His Throne because of its tremendous relevance to the previous chapter and the general theme of this entire treatise. But first we need to introduce Ibn al-Jauzá to those who don’t know his exalted status among the *‘ulamà’* of this blessed *ummah.* Abâ

[65] روضة الطالبين للإمام النووي, دار الكتب العلمية, بيروت, ج 7, ص 283, والمكتبة الإسلامية, دمشق, ج 10, ص 64.

’l-Faraj Ibn al-Jauzá was both a Hanbali and *Ash‘ará* (an Asharite). He was a high authority of the Hanbali *madhhab,* and a veritable polymath, a historian of encyclopaedic stature, a renown *muäaddith,* a commentator of the Qur‘àn, and one of the most prolific authors of Islam. According to the contemporary expert on the biography of the great men of Islam, Khair al-Dán al-Ziriklá (1396 / 1976; Cairo) the author of the biographical dictionary *al-A‘làm,* Ibn al-Jauzá wrote about three hundred books. Ibn Rajab al-Äanbalá (795 / 1393; Damascus) in his *Dhail Åabaqàt al-Äanàbalah,* in which he documented the histories of and assessed the importance of the Hanbali *ulamà’*, proclaimed Ibn al-Jauzá to be “the master (*shaikh*) of his time, the imam of his age.”[66] Imàm Shams al-Dán al-Dhahabá (d.748 / 1348; Damascus) lavished praise on him in his encyclopaedia of biography, *Siyar A‘làm al-Nubalà’,* declaring him “the Shaikh, the Imam, the Scholar (*al-‘alàmah*), the *Äàfiæ*[67], the Commentator of the Qur‘àn (*al-mufassir*), the Shaikh of Islam, the Pride of Iraq.”[68]

Ibn al-Jauzá says after introducing the question of *istiwà’* in his book *Daf‘ Shubah al-Tashbáh*:

> وجميع السلف على إيراد هذه الآية كما جاءت من غير تفسير ولا تأويل, وقد حمل قوم من المتأخرين هذه الصفة على مقتضى الحس, فقالوا: استوى على العرش بذاته, وهذه الزيادة لم ينقلوها, إنما فهموها من إحساسهم, وهو أن المستوي على الشيء إنما يستوي عليه بذاته. قال ابن حامد: الاستوى مماسة وصفة لذاته, والمراد بي القعود. قال: وقد ذهبت طائفة من أصحابنا إلى أن الله تعالى على عرشه ما ملأه, وأنه يقعد نبيه معه على العرش, وقال: والنزول انتقال, وعلى ما حكي تكون ذاته أصغر من العرش, فالعجب من قول هذا [وهو] ما نحن مجسمة.
>
> Now, all the *salaf* insist on taking this *àyah* as it came [that is accepting it and believing in it] without commenting on it or interpreting it. However, some people who came later understood this *àyah* in accordance with the requirements of the senses. Thus they said, “He ascended the Throne in person (*bá dhàtihá*).” What they said [namely: *bá dhàtihá* (“in person”)] is something extra; they did not report that [from any of the *salaf*]; rather, that is what they understood based on a sensible [or sensory] perspective, for [they reasoned that] one who ascends a throne does so with his person, [thus, Allah Ψ too must ascend it in person]. Ibn Äàmid[69] said: “*Istiwà’* involves contact, and it

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[66] Ibn Rajab, *Dhail Tabaqàt al-Äanàbalah,* (Beirut, Dàr al-Kutub al-‘Ilmáyah, 1st ed., 1417 h.), p. 337; vol. 1.

[67] A title reserved for those elect scholars who memorised vast numbers of *hadith*, and had proficiency in the science of *hadith* whereby they knew the narrators and what the authorities said about them and could distinguish the different grades of *hadith* and whether and by which chains of narration a *hadith* could be established as a *hadith*. See Æafar Aämad al-‘Uthmàná, *Qawà’id fi ‘Ulâm al-Hadith* (Riyadh, Al-‘Ubaikàn, 5th ed., 1404), p. 28.

[68] Al-Dhahabá, *Siyar A‘làm al-Nubalà’* (Beirut, Mu’assasah al-Risàlah, 1st ed., 1409 h.), p. 365; vol 21.

[69] Al-Qàçá Abâ ’l-Äusain ibn Abá Ya‘là (d. 526 / 1131; Baghdad), author of *Åabaqàt al-Äanàbalah,* which is an authoritative biographical dictionary of the Hanbali *ulamà’* until the sixth century of hegira–a sort of *Who’s Who* of the *madhhab*–gave great importance to Abâ ‘Abd Allàh ibn Äàmid (d. 403 h. / 1012) he

is an attribute on the divine being (*al-dhàt*). What is meant by it is *sitting.*" He said: "Some of our companions [that is, the Äanbalá *'ulamà'*] maintained that Allah is on His Throne but that He did not fill it, and that He will sit His prophet beside Him on the Throne [on the Day of Judgment]." He said: "*Al-nuzâl* [a reference to the *hadith* the literal meaning of which is that Allah *descends* to the lowest heaven during the last third of every night to ask who is praying that He might answer their prayer] implies *intiqàl* (moving from one place to another)." According to what he says His person is smaller than the Throne [Ibn al-Jauzá says this in sarcastic disgust, for what Ibn Äàmid has said is pagan talk.] What an amazing thing he has said! [He is] an anthropomorphist; however, we are not.

وقيل لابن الزاغوني: هل تجددت له صفة لم تكن بعد خلق العرش؟ قال: لا, إنما خلق العالم بصفة التحت, فصار العالم بالإضافة إليه أسفل, فإذا ثبتت لأحدى الذاتين صفة التحت, ثبت للآخر استحقاق صفة الفوق. قال: وقد ثبت أن الأماكن ليست في ذاته, ولا ذاته فيها, فثبت انفصاله عنها, ولا بد من بدء يحصل به الفصل, فلما قال استوى, علمنا أختصاص بتلك الجهة. قال: ولا بد لذاته نهاية وغاية يعلمها.

Someone said to Ibn al-Zàghâná[70]: "Did He acquire some attribute that He did not have previously after He created the Throne"? He said: "No. Rather, He created the Throne with the attribute of *below*, and so the Throne in relation to Him is below. Thus if it is established that one of two things one is below, it is established that other must have the attribute of *above*. He said: "It is established that neither are places in His being (*dhàt*), nor is He in places; therefore, it is established that He is separate from places, and consequently there must be a beginning [a demarcation that designates where He begins] that the separation be accomplished. So when He said that He ascended we learned that He is in that direction [the direction of the Throne which as He supposes is *above*]. He must have an end and an extreme that is known to Him."

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said: "The imam of the Hanbalis in his day, and their teacher, and their mufti." Almost six pages are devoted to his biography. [See Ibn Abá Ya'là, *Åabaqàt al-Äanàbalah* (Beirut, Dàr al-Kutub al-'Ilmáyah, 1st ed., 1417 h.), pp. 145-151; vol 2] Ibn Äàmid wrote a book in the science of belief called *Sharä Uãâl al-Dán* in which he professed a blatant anthropomorphism. Throughout *Daf' Shubah al-Tashbáh* Ibn al-Jauzá and criticizes him and refutes him.

[70] Ibn Rajab al-Äanbalá (795 / 1393; Damascus) wrote a two-volume appendix to *Åabaqàt al-Äanàbalah* in which he treated Hanbali *ulamà'* who lived after Ibn Abá Ya'là, author of the original work. Ibn Rajab quoted Ibn al-Sam'àná's appraisal of Abâ 'l-Äasan ibn al-Zàghâná (d. 527 / 1132; Baghdad) as "the *faqáh,* the *muäaddith,* the preacher, one of the great men of the *madhhab.*" He quoted Ibn Nàãir as saiying that he was "the *faqáh* of his age." He quoted Ibn al-Jauzá as saying that he studied *fiqh* and *äadáth* for a long time with Ibn al-Zàghâná. [Ibn Rajab, *Dhail Åabaqàt al-Äanàbalah* (Beirut, Dàr al-Kutub al-'Ilmáyah, 1st ed., 1417 h.), pp. 150-153; vol. 1] Ibn al-Zàghâná wrote a book on belief which he also sullied with a crude literalism. Ibn al-Jauzá answers him in his *Daf' Shubah al-Tashbáh.*

قلت: هذا الرجل لا يدري ما يقول, لأنه إذا قدر غاية وفصلا بين الخالق والمخلوق فقد حدده, وأقر بأنه جسم, وهو يقول في كتابه إنه ليس بجوهر لأن الجوهر ما تحيز, ثم يثبت له مكانا يتحيز فيه.

I declare [Ibn al-Jauzá says]: This man does not know what he is saying because if he supposes that there is an end and a separation between the Creator and what He created, he attributes limit to him, and thus confirms that He is a body. Yet he says in his book that He is not a *jauhar* [that is, an atom, or some indivisible unit of which bodies are made] because the *jauhar* occupies a place, then he [turns around and] confirms that He has a place in which he is located!

قلت وهذا جهل من قائله وتشبيه محض, فما عرف هذا الشيخ ما يجب للخالق تعالى وما يستحيل عليه, فإن وجوده تعالى ليس كوجود الجواهر والأجسام التي لا بد لها من الحيز, والتحت الفوق إنما يكون فيما يقابل ويحاذي, ومن ضرورة المحاذي أن يكون أكبر من المحاذى أو أصغر أو مثله, وأن هذا ومثله إنما يكون في الأجسام, وكل ما يحاذى الجسام يجوز أن يمسها, وما جاز عليه مماسة الأجسام ومباينتها فهو حادث إذ قد ثبت أن الدليل على حدوث الجواهر قبولها المماسة والمباينة. فإن أجازوا هذا عليه قالوا بجواز حدوثه, وإن منعوا جواز هذا عليه, لم يبق لنا طريق لإثبات حدوث الجواهر, ومتى قدرنا مستغنيا عن المحل والحيز ومحتاجا إلى الحيز ثم قلنا: إما أن يكونا متجاورين أو متباينين, كان ذلك محالا, فإن التجاوو التباين من لوازم التحيز في المتحيزات.

I declare [Ibn al-Jauzá says]: This talk is nonsense and sheer anthropomorphism (*tashbáh*)! This man doesn't know what is necessary of the Creator, and what is impossible of Him. Indeed, His existence is not like the existence of atoms (*jawàhir*) and bodies that must have a location. "Below" and "above" only apply to what can be faced and gotten opposite to. Now, what is gotten opposite to has of necessity to be bigger, smaller, or equal to what is opposite it--but this is what applies to bodies. Whatever faces bodies may [conceivably] be contacted, and whatever can be in contact with bodies, or can be separate from them, is originated since it is known [in science of *kalàm*] that the proof that atoms (*jawàhir*) are originated is their capacity to be contacted and to be separate. Thus, whoever permits [contact and separation] for God permits Him to be originated. If they maintain that He is *not* originated in spite of His being susceptible to contact and separation, we will not be left with any means to demonstrate that atoms are originated.

Furthermore, if we conceive of a thing transcending space and location (*äaiz*) [namely, God], and another requiring space and location [namely, bodies], then we may neither declare the two to be contiguous, nor separate, since contiguity and separateness are among the consequences of occupying space.

Ibn al-Jauzá here discusses that what can be opposite something, or be in contact or separate must be a body since these are the concomitants of bodies—whatever has these attributes must

necessarily be a body. That is clear and we have already discussed the rational thoroughly throughout this treatise, but he brings here another argument; namely, that if we suppose for the sake of argument that Allah Ì who is eternal can be separate from bodies and in contact with them and opposite, it would follow that it is possible that the bodies and atoms are also eternal (that is without any beginning), and in that case we would have no way of inferring and proving that they have a creator and thus no reason to believe in religion. No doubt that is a most repugnant idea to the believers, so in this way Ibn al-Jauzá is able to illustrate the repugnance of what Ibn al-Zàgâná is professing. In the last paragraph above Ibn al-Jauzá that it does not follow that if a thing exists it must be in spatial relationship with other things that exist because it is possible that the thing that exists is eternal and therefore transcends time and space. The *mushabbihah* in our time when we tell them that Allah Ψ does not exist in world nor outside of it often retort that we have therefore effectively denied his existence. The reply to them is that there are two types of existence one is eternal, necessary, independent, and self-sufficient and therefore beyond all need of space and another which is originated, contingent, and dependent and in need of space to occupy. The assumption that the two types of existence that are so profoundly different must have the same need for space is completely unfounded. How could it be otherwise when one is the creator of space and the other like the space it occupies is created? Let us return to Ibn al-Jauzá's remonstration with the *mushabbihah:*

> وقد ثبت أن الاجتماع والافتراق من لوازم التحيز, والحق سبحانه وتعالى لا يوصف بالتحيز, لأنه لو كان متحيرا لم يخل إما أن يكون ساكنا في حيزه أو متحركا عنه, ولا يجوز أن يوصف بحركة ولا سكون ولا اجتماع ولا افتراق, ومن جاور أو باين فقد تناهي ذاتا, والمتناهي إذا اختص بمقدار استدعي مخصصا, وكذا ينبغي أن يقال ليس بداخل في العالم وليس بخارج منه لأن الدخول والخروج من لوازم المتحيزات, فهما كالحركة والسكون وسائر الأعراض التي تحس بالأجرام.
>
> It has already been established that coming together and becoming separate are among the concomitants [the inseparable attributes] of occupying space. However, the Real (al-Äaqq), high and exalted is He, may not be described by the occupation of space because if He did occupy space, He would either have to be at rest in the space He occupied, or moving from it; whereas, He may neither be described by movement nor stillness; nor union nor separation [since these are the attributes of things which are contingent and originated, not of that which is necessary and eternal]. Whatever is contiguous or separate must have a finite existence [because it will be limited by what it is contiguous to or separate from]. Furthermore, what is finite must have dimensions, and what has dimensions needs something to determine its particular dimensions [and whatever has a need can not be the God and originator of the cosmos, rather God is that which fulfills all needs].

Furthermore [from another point of view], it can be pointed out that He is neither in this world nor outside it because entering and exiting are inseparable attributes of things that occupy space. Entering and exiting are just like movement and stillness and all other accidents that apply to bodies only.

وأما قولهم خلق الأماكن لا في ذاته, فثبت انفصاله عنها, قلنا: ذاته المقدسة لا تقبل أن يخلق فيها شيء ولا أن يحل فيها شيء, وقد حملهم الحس على التشبيه والتخليط, حتى قال بعضهم: إنما ذكر الاستوى على العرش لأنه أقرب الموجودات إليه. وهذا جهل أيضا, لأن قرب المسافة لا يتصور إلا في الجسم, ويعز علينا كيف ينسب هذا القائل إلى مذهبنا. واحتج بعضهم بأنه على العرش بقوله

As for their claim [as Ibn al-Zàghâná claims above] that since He did not create things in His being (*dhàt*); therefore, it is established that they are separate from Him, we reply [in refutation of this claim] that His transcendent being (*dhàtuhâ al-muqaddasah*) is beyond having things created in it, or that anything should occur in it.[71]

It is apparent that what [these anthropomorphists] presume is based on sensory analogy. Their inability to conceive of a reality beyond material experience led them into bewilderment, and to liken the attributes of the transcendent God to the attributes of originated things [that is, to commit *tashbáh*]. Indeed, the bewilderment and *tashbáh* of some of them reached such a degree that they declared: "The reason God mentioned His *ascension* (*istiwà'*) on the Throne is that it is the nearest thing to him." This is sheer ignorance because nearness in terms of distance can only be conceived of in relation to bodies [whereas, in relation to the transcendent God who is not a body, it is inconceivable]. We are at a loss to understand how a person who advocates such a thing could claim to follow our *madhhab* [the Äanbalá Madhhab].[72]

واحتج بعضهم بأنه على العرش بقوله تعالى: ﴿إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ﴾ (فاطر:10) وبقوله تعالى: ﴿وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ﴾ (الأنعام:18) وجعلوا ذلك فوقيه حسية ونسوا أن الفوقية الحسية إما أن تكون لجسم أو جوهر, وأن الفوقية قد تطلق لعلو المرتبة, فيقال فلان فوق فلان ثم إنه كما قال تعالى ﴿فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ﴾ قال ﴿وَهُوَ مَعَكُم﴾ (الحديد:4), فمن حملها على العلم حمل خصمه الاستواء على القهر, وذهب طائفة إلى أن الله تعالى على عرشه قد ملأه والأشبه أنه مماس للعرش والكرسي موضع قدميه. قلت المماسة إنما تقع بين جسمين, وما أبقى هذا في التجسيم بقية.[73]

Some of them tried to prove that Allah is [literally] on the Throne by His word, exalted is He: "To Him the good word

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[71] As I mentioned previously (**CROSS-REFERENCE**) , God acts in other than Himself; whereas, all creatures act in themselves. This point was stressed by Ibn al-'Arabá (d. 543 / 1148; Fez) in his *al-'Àriçah* (**REFERENCE**)

[72] Ibn al-Jauzá, *Daf' Shubah al-Tashbáh* (Cairo, Maktabah Kulláyat al-Azharáyah, 1991), pp, 20-23.

[73] دفع شبه التشبيه بأكف التنزيه لابن الجوزي, مكتبة الكلية الأزهرية, القاهرة, 1412هـ/1991م, ص 20-23.

ascends" (35:10), and by His word, exalted is He: "And He is dominating over His slaves" (6:18), for they assumed that these words indicate that He is above in a [literal] sensible way [that is, a sensory and perceivable way, or in other words a physical way] forgetting that "above" in the sensible way applies only to a body or an atom (*jauhar*) and that "above" can be used in the sense of "high rank"; thus, one might say "So and so is above so and so."[74]

Sa'd al-Dán al-Taftàzàná says that attributing to Allah I a place or a direction or claiming that He is in contact with or separate from the world is *tashbáh*

Sa'd al-Dán al-Taftàzàná (d. 793 / 1390; Samarkand)[75], in his *Sharä al-'Aqà'id al-Nasafáyah* made the same point as Ibn al-Jauzá:

واحتج المخالف بالنصوص الظاهرة في الجهة والجسمية والصور والجوارح وبأن كل موجودين فرض لا بد أن يكون أحدهما متصلا بالآخر مماسا له أو منفصلا عنه مباينا في الجهة, والله تعالى ليس حالا ولا محلا للعالم, فيكون مبيانا في الجهة فيتحيز فيكون جسما مصورا متناهيا. والجواب أن ذلك وهم محض وحكم على غير المحسوس بأحكام المحسوس, والأدلة القطعية قائمة على التنزيهات, فيجب أن يفوّض علم النصوص إلى الله تعالى على هو دأب السلف إيثارا للطريق الأسلام أو تؤول تأويلات صحيحة على ما اختاره المتأخرين دفعا لمطاعن الجاهلين وجذبا بضيع القاصرين سلوكا للسبيل الأحكام.[76]

The adversaries cling to the outward sense of the [ambiguous texts] in order to predicate direction, corporeality, form, and limbs of the divinity. Moreover, they argued that whenever we suppose two things to be present, it is inevitable that either one of them is in contact with the other touching it, or that it is separate from it away from it in some direction. Now, [they argue] since Allah is neither in the world, nor is the world in Him, it stands that He is separate from it and away from it in some direction, located in some place (*mutaäayyiz*). Thus, He has to be a body[77], or part of a body, having a form, and an extreme limit.

The answer to them is that what they say is sheer delusion: the judging of what is supersensible according to

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[74] This figure of speech is idiomatic (that is, in conventional use) even in the English language which compared to Arabic is a dead language as far as metaphor and figure of speech is concerned.

[75] We discussed who al-Taftàzàná was in a previous note, so if you have forgotten refer to it again (see footnote 52).

[76] شرح العقائد للتفتازاني

[77] **(REFERENCE)** an explanation is required to show that the anthropomorphists of today decline to use the word body but they assert all the requirements of body. Ibn Taimáyah declined to use the word because as he says it was not used in the Qur'àn and Sunnah which implies that that is the only reason he refrained from using the term. Ibn 'Adb al-Salàm explained that the *Äashawáyah* are of two types: one that comes right out with it and the other which is circumspect. The *Äashawáyah* have become cautious after centuries of dispute with the *Ashà'irah.* Nowadays they do not dare to use the term *body* for hear of the anathema that they will bring upon themselves from sane quarters of this nation.

> the criteria of what is sensible. Conclusive proofs (*al-adillat al-qaå'áyah*) are established which determine the absolute and imperative necessity of maintaining the pure transcendence of God. Therefore, it is necessary that either we leave the knowledge of the meaning of the ambiguous texts to Allah, exalted is He, as was the custom of the *Salaf* [the first three generations of Islam] preferring the safer way (*al-åaráq al-aslam*); or we interpret them in a correct way as is the custom of the later *'ulamà'* in order to refute the propaganda of the ignorant [an allusion to the Äashawáyah] and take simpleminded souls by the arm in a way which is safer (*al-åaráq al-aäkam*) [for the simpleminded].[78]

Fatwà of Imàm al-Quråubá Confirming That Anthropomorphists are Idol-Worshippers

Imàm al-Quråubá (d. 671 / 1273; Egypt), the famous commentator of the Qur'àn, stated in his *al-Tadhkirah*[79] **(REFERENCE)** concerning the anthropomorphists (*al-mujassimah*): "The correct opinion is that they are unbelievers since there is no difference between them, and between the worshippers of idols and pictures." Once I mentioned to one of my teachers that some people insist that we must believe that Allah I ascends His Throne in person (*bá dhàtihá*). He replied with utmost disgust: "They worship an idol in the sky!"

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[78] Quoted in the supercommentary of *Sharä al-'Aqà'id al-Nasafáyah* by RamaÇàn Efendá known as *Äàshiyah RamaÇàn Efendá* (Multan, Pakistan; Maktabah Imdádáyah, n.d.), pp.112-113. See also Sá'd al-Dán al-Taftàzàná, *Sharä al-'Aqà'id al-Nasafáyah*, (Syrian edition with no name of publisher or date edited by Muäammad 'Adnàn Darwásh, and checked by Professor Adáb al-Kallàs of Aleppo), pp. 96-97. *Sharä al-'Aqà'id al-Nasafáyah* is a required text of study in the religious schools (*madàris*) of Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, and Turkey, and also in Azhàr University, Cairo. An English translation of *Sharä al-'Aqà'id al-Nasafáyah* exists. See Earl Edgar Elder, *A Commentary on the Creed of Islam.* (Books for Libraries, reprint ed., 1980).

[79] (p. 208) **(REFERENCE)**

Concerning the Fact That the *Salaf* Used Sometimes to Indulge in *Ta‘wál* of the *Mu-tashàbihàt*

It is often said in countenancing the *mutashàbihàt* the *salaf* indulged in *tafwáç,* whereas, the later *‘ulamà’* had recourse to *ta’wál.* While this is true in general terms it is not always true because the fact is that the *salaf* not infrequently also indulged in *ta’wál.* Thus, it is more correct to say that the *salaf* usually indulged in *tafwáç* while sometimes resorting to *ta’wál,* whereas the later *‘ulamà’* usually indulged in *ta’wál.* However, keep in mind that the later *‘ulamà’* of the Màturádáyah continued to insist on *tafwáç* as a general rule. Now the fact that the *salaf did* resort sometimes to *ta’wál* is highly significant because it shows incontrovertibly that it is permissible contrary to the preposterous claims of the *mushabbihah* who insist that *ta’wál* constitutes *ta‘åál,* that is, the denial of the *ãifàt* (the divine attributes). In this section I will cite numerous authentic examples of the *salaf’s* indulgence in *ta’wál.*

I propose to quote from the great commentator of the Qur’an and one of the illustrious *salaf* of this blessed *ummah,* Äàfiz Ibn Jarár al-Åabará[80] (d. 310 / 923; Baghdàd). However, we will introduce him first so that the reader that does not have a lot of background will know the status of the person we are quoting. Tàj al-Dán al-Subká (d. 771 / 1370; Damascus) said in his great work of biography about Shafi *‘ulamà’:* “He is the great imam, the *mujtahid* absolute, one of the imams of the world in knowledge and piety.”[81] He quoted Khatib al-Baghdàdá, a *muäaddith* imam and a universally acclaimed expert in the criticism of narrators and the history of Islam, and an erudite scholar in the biography of the *‘ulamà* and great men of Islam who wrote in his opus work *Tàrikh Baghdàd* about al-Åabará:

> كان ابن جرير أحد الأئمة, يُحكم بقوله, ويُرجع إلى رأيه لمعرفته وفضله, جمع من العلوم ما لم يشاركه فيه أحد من أهل عصره, فكان حافظا لكتاب الله, بصيرا بالمعاني, فقيها في أحكام القرآن, عالما بالسنن وطرقها, صحيحها و سقيمها, وناسخها ومنسوخها, عارفا بأقوال الصحابة والتابعين ومن بعدهم من المخالفين[82] في الأحكام ومسائل الحلال والحرام, عارفا بأيام الناس وأخبارهم, وله الكتاب المشهور في تاريخ الأمم والملوك وكتاب في التفسير لم يصنف أحد مثله وكتاب سماه تهذيب الآثار لم أر سواه في معناه إلا أنه لم يتمّه وله في أصول الفقه وفروعه كتب كثيرة.[83]
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> He is one of the imams. The scholars decide according to his opinion [in the matter of *tafsár,* and the status of *hadith* and its narrators, history and so on] and they set-

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[80] Abâ Ja ‘far Muäammad ibn Jarár ibn Yazád al-Åabará (224-310 / 839-923; Baghdàd)

[81] طبقات الشافعية للسبكي, نسخة مصورة من طبعة عيسى البابي الحلبى, ج 3, ص121.

[82] في تاريخ بغداد: من الخالفين

[83] طبقات الشافعية, ص 122.

> tle on his opinion [in matters of controversy] because of his knowledge and greatness. He achieved knowledge such as nobody in his time achieved. He memorized the Book of Allah, and had great insight into its meanings. He had detailed knowledge of all the rules of law embodied in the Qur'an and he was learned in the *sunnah* and the various chains of narration for the different *hadith,* and he was discerning about what was rigorously authentic and what was weak. He knew the opinions of the Companions and the Followers and those who came after them [the Followers of the Followers] on issues of religious knowledge and about what was permitted and prohibited. He knew the history of all people and their lore. He wrote a famous book about the history of the peoples and their kings, and a book in *tafsár* the likes of which was never written, and a book called *Tahdháb al-Àthàr* the class of which I have never seen although he did not complete it, and he has many books in the subject of the principles of *fiqh* and of *fiqh.*[84]

Imam al-Dhahabá says about him in his *Siyaru A 'làm al-Nubalà':*

الإمام العَلم المجتهد عالم العصر, أبو جعفر الطبري, صاحب التصانيف البديعة.[85]

> The imam, the mountain [of knowledge], the scholar of the age, Abâ Ja'far al-Åabará.

واستقر في أواخر أمره ببغداد, وكان من كبار أئمة الاجتهاد.[86]

> Towards the end of his life he settled in Baghdad; he was one of the great imams of *ijtihad* [that is, like Abâ Äanifah, Màlik, Shàfi'á and Aämad].

Imam al-Suyâtá (d. 911 / 1505; Cairo) says in his work on the sciences of the Qur'an, *al-Itqàn fá 'Ulâm al-Qur'àn:*

وبعدهم ابن جرير الطبري, وكتابه أجل التفاسير وأعظمها ثم ابن أبي الحاتم وابن ماجه والحاكم وابن مردويه الخ[87]

> Then after them [the Companions and the Followers] Ibn Jarár al-Åabará, and his book is the best and greatest *tafsár* that there is. Then Ibn Abá Äàtim and Ibn Màjah….

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[84] This passage from al-Khaåáb was also quoted by Imam al-Dhahabá in his *Siyaru A'làm al-Nubalà* (Beirât: Mu'assasatu 'l-Risàlah, 1419 h. / 1998), vol. 14, p. 269.

[85] سير أعلام النبلاء للذهبى, مؤسسة الرسالة, 1419هـ/1998م, ج 14, ص 267.

[86] سير أعلام النبلاء للذهبى, ج 14, ص 269.

[87] الإتقان في علوم القرآن للسيوطي, المكتبة العصرية, 1408هـ/1988م, ج 4, ص 212.

والعجب ممن أنكر المعنى المفهوم من كلام العرب في تأويل قول الله (ثم استوى إلى السماء) الذي هو بمعنى: العلو الارتفاع هربا عند نفسه من أن يلزمه بزعمه إذا تأوله بمعناه المفهوم, كذلك أن يكون إنما علا وارتفع بعد أن كان تحتها إلى أن تأوله بالمجهول من تأويله المستنكر, ثم لم ينج مما هرب منه, فيقال له: زعمت أن تأويل قوله (استوى) أقبل, أفكان مدبرا عن السماء, فأقبل إليها؟ فإن زعم أن ذلك ليس بإقبال فعل ولكنه إقبال تدبير, قيل له: فكذلك فقل: علا عليها علو ملك وسلطان لا علو انتقال وزوال.[88]

From the foregoing we see that al-Åabará was one of the most learned men in the history of Islam, an imam in the science of *tafsár* who book in *tafsár* is the most highly regarded *tafsár* that there is, and that he was a *mujtahid* imam and one of the *salaf.* Al-Åabará's *tafsár* is the earliest extant *tafsár* there is, and it is distinguished as being of that class of *tafsár* that is mainly based on reports with chains of narrations from the Prophet, the Companions and the Followers, rather than that class which is predominantly learned opinion as is usual in later *tafsirs*. Now what I am interested in now is to show that not only did this undisputed and unrivalled imam of *tafsár* in the age of the *salaf* indulge freely in *ta'wál,* but he filled his book with examples of *ta'wál* from Ibn 'Abbàs and other Companions, and Followers. Imam al-Åabará said in his *tafsár:*

العجب ممن أنكر المعنى

[88] جامع البيان عن تأويل آي القرآن المعروف بتفسير الطبري للإمام الطبري, لأبي جعفر الطبري, دار الفكر, 1408هـ/1988م, ج 1, ص 192.

Concerning the *Hadith* of the Slave Girl "Where is Allah"

Among the *hadith* which the *mushabbihah* cite as proof of their perverted belief that Allah I, who infinitely transcends the unholy things they ascribe to Him, is physically located in the sky and describable by direction is the famous *hadith* which is referred to as *Hadith* al-Jàriyah (The *Hadith* of the Slave Girl). The *hadith* was reported by the Companion Mu'àwiyah ibn al-Äakam al-Sulamá and it was transmitted by Imam Muslim and many other *muäaddithân* (authoritative transmitters of *hadith*) with variant wording. In the version that was reported by Muslim, Mu'àwiyah ibn al-Äakam mentioned that he had a slave girl with whom he became angry and slapped on the face. When he told that to the Messenger of Allahυ, he took it very seriously; whereupon, Mu'àwiyah ibn al-Äakam suggested that he free the girl. The Prophet ρ told him to bring him the girl, for as can be judged by the context of the *hadith*, he wanted to see if she was a believer or not. When she appeared before the Prophetρ, he asked her: "Where is Allah?" She replied: "In the sky." He asked her: "Who am I?" She replied: "You are the Messenger of Allah." He said: "Free her for she is a believer."[89] The orthodox *'ulamà'*; that is, the *'ulamà'* of Ahl al-*sunnah* wa l-Jamà'ah, insisted unanimously that the literal meaning of this *hadith* is definitely not implied. Some of them consigned the meaning of it to Allah Ψ, while denying the literal, material meaning (that is, they adopted *tafwáç*), while others resorted to legitimate interpretations (*ta'wál*); whereas; only the Äashawáyah insisted on the literal meaning. In what follows I will quote a number of *'ulamà'* representing *muäaddithân* and *fuqahà'* of the highest standing from all four of the orthodox *madhhabs* so that the reader can have a representative sampling of what the qualified authorities have to say about the interpretation of this *hadith*.

In his commentary on *Ãaäää Muslim,* the Shafi imam, Sharaf al-Dán al-Nawawá (d. 676 / 1277; Nawà, Syria) discussed the implications of the above *hadith*:

> هذا الحديث من أحاديث الصفات وفيها مذهبان تقدم ذكرهما مرات في كتاب الإيمان: أحدهما الإيمان به من غير خوض في معناه مع اعتقاد أن الله تعالى ليس كمثله شيء وتنزيهه عن سمات المخلوقات, الثاني تأويله بما يليق به, فمن قال بهذا قال: كان المراد امتحانها هل هي موحّدة تقر بأن الخالق المدبر الفعال هو الله وحده, وهو الذي إذا دعاه الداعى استقبل السماء كما إذا صلى المصلي استقبل الكعبة, وليس ذلك لأنه منحصر في السماء كما أنه ليس منحصرا في جهة الكعبة, بل ذلك لأن السماء

[89] Muslim reported it in *Kitàb al-Masàjid wa Mawàçi' al-Salàh.* See *Sharä Ãaäää Muslim* (Damascus, Dàr al-Khair, 1st ed., 1418), pp.190-194; vol. 5.

قبلة الداعين كما أن الكعبة قبلة المصلين, أو هي من عبدة الأوثان العابدين للأوثان التي بين أيدينا, فلما قالت في السماء علم أنها موحّدة وليست عابدة للأوثان.[90]

> This is one of the *hadith* that involves the attributes [of Allah Y]. There are two schools of thought (*madhhabs*) in regards to such *hadith*[91] both of which I have discussed repeatedly in the chapter *Kitàb al-Ámàn.* The first *madhhab* is to believe in it without concerning oneself with its meaning, while maintaining categorically that Allah does not resemble anything [a reference to the *àyah* in which are the words*:* "Nothing is like Him" (42:11)], and maintaining that He transcends the attributes of created things [which *madhhab* is called *tafwáç*]. The second *madhhab* is to interpret (*ta'wál*) the *hadith* in a way that is commensurate with Him [that is, His greatness and transcendence]. Those who prefer to interpret said that in the present *hadith* the Prophet ρ meant to examine her to see whether or not she was one of those who worships idols on the earth, or one of those who maintain the uniqueness of Allah (*muwaääidân*) and believe that the creator, the disposer, and the one who effects [all things] is Allah, no one else. For when [those who maintain the uniqueness of Allah (*muwaääidân*)] supplicate [the transcendent God], they turn [their attention, or their hands[92]] to the sky just as when they pray [the ritual prayer] they face the Ka'bah; yet, that does not mean that Allah is located in the sky just as it does not mean that He is located in the direction of the Ka'bah*.* Rather, they turn [their attention, or their hands] to the sky because the sky is the prescribed direction of orientation (*al-qiblah* / القبلة), just as the Ka'bah is the prescribed direction of orientation (*al-qiblah*) for the ritual prayer (*al-âalàh*). So when she said that He is in the sky, it was known that she was one of those who maintain the uniqueness of Allah (*muwaääid*), and not a worshipper of idols.

Maämâd Khitàb al-Subká (d. 1352 / 1933; Cairo)[93] in his commentary on *Sunan Abá Dàwâd* quoted the Maliki imam and

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[90] شرح صحيح مسلم للنووي, دار الخير, دمشق, الطبعة الرابعة, 1418هـ/1998م, كتاب المساجد ومواقع الصلاة, باب تحرنم الكلام في الصلاة, حديث رقم 537, ج 5, ص 193.

[91] That is, the ambiguous, or allegorical texts which are called *al-muhashàbihàt* / المتسابهات in Arabic.

(NB: This long explanation is quite out of place here and anticlimactical too. You have already discussed this topic amply. Therefore, either advance it as a note in an appropriate place or cut it.)

[92] The literal wording here is *they turn to the sky*, or *they face the sky.* However, since it is reported that the Prophet ρ forbade the Muslims to look at the sky, and taught them to raise the palm of their hands towards the sky, the phrase should be interpreted accordingly.

[93] He was a Maliki *faqih* and a teacher at al-Azhar University.

muäaddith al-Màzará (d. 536 / 1141; al-Mahdáyah) who wrote a commentary on *Saääh Muslim:*

> وقال المازري: أراد صلى الله تعالى عليه وسلم معرفة ما يدل على إيمانها لأن معبودات الكفار من صنم ونار بالأرض وكل منهم يسأل حاجته من معبوده والسماء قبلة الموحدين ولا يدل ذلك على جهته ولا انحصاره في السماء كما لا يدل التوجه إلى القبلة على انحصاره في الكعبة.[94]

> He ρ meant to find some indication about her belief. The unbelievers worshipped things like idols and fire on the earth, each one of them asking his need from the thing he worshipped. Whereas, the sky is the direction (*al-qiblah*) [of petition] of those who maintain the oneness of Allah (*al-muwaääidun*) [for they raise their hands to heaven when they supplicate Allah], yet that does not mean that Allah is [located] in a direction, or that He is confined to the sky, just as facing the direction of prayer (*al-qiblah*) does not mean that He is confined to the Ka'bah.

An almost verbatim explanation was given by Badr al-Dán al-'Ainá[95] (d. 855 /1451; Cairo), a Hanafi imam and a famous *muäaddith* in his commentary on *Sunan Abá Dàwâd.*[96] Since it is almost identical, I will dispense with quoting him. After quoting al-Màzará, Maämâd Khitàb al-Subká added:

> وقيل إنما سألها بأين عما تعتقده من عظمة الله تعالى, وإشارتها إلى السماء إخبار عن جلاله جلّ وعزّ في نفسها وأنه في المنزلة العليا من التنزه عن الحوادث وصفاتها وليست هي كأهل الشرك في عبادتهم لما لا عظمة له وإنما هو جماد يصنع باليد لا يسمع ولا يبصر ولا يغنى شيئا وفي هذا كله صرف للفظ أين عما هي له, فإنها موضوعة للاستفهام عن المكان وهي مصروفة عن ظاهره باتفاق السلف والخلف لقوله تعالى (ليس كمثله شيء وهو السميع البصير) إلا أن السلف قالوا نؤمن به وبمثله من المتشابه من غير خوض في معناه مع اعتقاد أن الله ليس كمثله وهو أسلم وهو مذهبنا.[97]

> Some have said that he only asked her "where" to learn what she believes about the exaltedness of Allah, glorious is He. Her pointing to the sky [and in another version her saying "in the sky"] indicated the majesty in which she held Him, great and glorious is He, as it indicated that He possesses that exalted degree that far transcends the degree of originated things and their attributes, and it indicated that she was not one of those polytheists who worshipped what has no exaltedness, for they are but inanimate objects fashioned by hand that do not hear nor see and do not benefit at all. Now in all this [that is, the foregoing explanations] what we have is the

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[94] المنهل العذب المورود شرح سنن أبي داود لمحمود بن محمد بن أحمد بن خطاب السبكي, مؤسسة التاريخ العربي, بيروت, ج 6, ص 34.

[95] Al-'Ainá wrote a large number of books in numerous fields, perhaps the most celebrated of his works is his commentary on *Ãaääá al-Bukhàrá.*

[96] شرح سنن أبي داود للعيني, مكتبة الرشد, الرياض, الطبعة الأولى, 1420هـ/1999م, ج 4, ص 186.

[97] المنهل العذب المورود, ج 6, ص 34.

> interpretation of "where" in other than its assigned meaning [that is, its literal, or original meaning], for it was assigned to ask about place, yet it is used [in the *hadith* under consideration] in other than its outward [literal] meaning and this fact is a matter of agreement among both the *salaf* [the early Muslims] and the later *'ulamà',* because of His word, exalted is He, "Nothing is like Him, and He is the hearing, the seeing" (42:11). However, the *salaf* said we believe in it [the *mutashàbih*] and the likes of it among the *mutashàbihàt* [ambiguous texts] without speculating about their meaning while believing that Allah is not like anything, and that course is safer and it is my position.

Mulla 'Alá al-Qàrá (d. 1014 h. / 1606; Makkah) was a Hanafi *faqáh*, a *muäaddith* , an expert in language, a *mutakallim,* and a prolific author of important Islamic texts including the commentary on Abâ Äanáfah's *al-Fiqh al-Akbar,* which is a work on belief, and a ten-volume commentary on the *hadith* compilation *Mishkàt al-Maãàbáä.* Commenting on thewords reported from the Prophet ρ "Where is Allah?" in the *Hadith* al-Jàriyah*,* he wrote:

> (فقال لها) أي الجارية (رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: أين الله؟) وفي رواية أين ربك؟ أي: أين مكان حكمه وأمره وظهور ملكه وقدرته (فقالت: في السماء). قال القاضي: هو على معنى الذي جاء أمره ونهيه من قبل السماء لم يرد به السؤال عن المكان, فإنه منزه عنه كما هو منزه عن الزمان, بل مراده صلى الله عليه وسلم من سؤاله إياها أن يعلم أنها موحدة أو مشركة, لأن كفار العرب كانوا يعبدون الأصنام, وكان لكل قوم منهم صنم مخصوص يكون فيما بينهم يعبدونه ويعظمونه, ولعل سفهاءهم وجهلتهم كانوا لا يعرفون معبودا غيره, فأراد أن يتعرف أنها ما تعبد, فلما قالت: في السماء, وفي رواية أشارت إلى السماء, فهم أنها موحدة يريد بذلك نفي الآلهة الأرضية التي هي الأصنام, لا إثبات السماء مكانا له تعالى الله عما يقول الظالمون علوا كبيرا, ولأنه لما كان مأمورا بأن يكلم الناس على قدر عقولهم ويهديهم إلى الحق على حسب فهمهم, ووجدها تعتقد أن المستحق للعبودية إله يدبر الأمر من السماء إلى الأرض لا الآلهة التي يعبدها المشركون قنع منها بذلك, ولم يكلفها اعتقاد ما هو صرف التوحيد حقيقة التنزيه, وقيل: معناه أن أمره ونهيه ورحمته ووحيه جاءت من السماء فهو كقوله تعالى (أأمنتم من في السماء) قيل: وقد جاء في بعض الأحاديث أن هذه الجارية كانت خرساء, ولهذا جوّز الشافعي الأخرس في العتق, فقوله فقالت في السماء بمعنى أشارت إلى السماء كما في رواية.[98]

> "The Messenger of Allah ρ said to her [that is the slave girl], where is Allah"? and in another version of the same *hadith* there is the wording: "Where is your Lord?" It means that where is His place of decision, and His order, and the place where His dominion and power are manifested. "She said: In the sky." Al-Qàçá ['Iyàç] said: "The meaning is that His command and His prohibition comes from the direction of the sky. The Prophet ρ did not mean to ask her about the whereabouts of Allah, since He transcends

[98] مرقات المفاتيح بشرح مشكاة المصابيح ملا على القاري, مكتبة الحقانية, الباكستان, ج 6, ص454.

such an attribute as place, just as He transcends the attribute of time. Rather, the Prophet ρ intended to find out by his question to her whether she was a monotheist declaring the uniqueness of Allah (*muwaääidah*), or whether she was a polytheist (*mushrikah*) because the Arabs were worshipping idols. Each clan amongst them had its special idol, which it worshipped and revered. Perhaps some of their ignorant and stupid people did not recognize any god whatsoever; therefore, the Prophet ρ wanted to ascertain what she worshipped. So when she said "in the sky," or, as in another version, she pointed to the sky, he υ understood that she was a monotheist declaring the uniqueness of Allah. In other words, he wanted to preclude the gods on earth; that is, the idols. He did not mean to imply that He occupies a place in the sky; far-removed is Allah from what the transgressors ascribe to Him in their insolence. Moreover, the Prophet ρ had been ordered to speak to the people according to the extent of their intelligence, and to guide them to the truth in way which was appropriate to their understanding. So when the Prophet ρ found that she believed that the one who deserves to be worshipped is the God who implements His purpose from the sky to the earth, not the gods which the pagans worshipped, he was satisfied with that much from her, and he ρ did not charge her with sheer unity (*ãirf al-tauääd* / صرف التوحيد)–the principle of transcendence (*äaqáqat al-tanzáh* / حقيقة التنزيه). Some [of the *ulamà'*] have said that the meaning is that His order and prohibition, His mercy and revelation comes from the sky. In that case, this *hadith* is similar [in its implications] to His wordρ: "Do you feel secure from Him who is in the sky…?"[99] Furthermore, in some other [authentic] versions of this *hadith* it comes that this girl was dumb, and for that reason [Imàm] al-Shafi'á [d. 204 / 820; Cairo] permitted the freeing of a slave even if he is dumb.[100] In such case, the words in the *hadith* "She said, 'In the sky.'" mean that she pointed to the sky [since she could not speak, obviously; and this is just what has come expressly in another version of the *hadith*: "She pointed to the sky."]

Maulànà Muäammad Zakaráyah al-Kàndahlawá (d. 1402 / 1982; Medinah) in his famous commentary on *Muwaååa' Màlik,* known as *Au-*

[99] For the exegesis of this verse see footnote (NB: CROSS-REFERENCE NEEDED).

[100] Keep in mind that when an imam like al-Shàfi'á acts on a particular *hadith*, it means that the *hadith* is authentic as far as he is concerned. Since he is a *mujtahid* imam, which presupposes that he knows all the different chains of narration by which a *hadith* might be transmitted, and knows the narrators and their merits and weaknesses, and the rules and principles of the science of *hadith*; rather, he establishes the principles of the science, or what is more important, he establishes himself from the primary sources of the *Shará'ah* the rules which govern when and when not a *hadith* may be adduced in an issue of law or belief, so it is rightly presumed that he knows all that better than anybody else or at least just as well as anybody else. The opinion of any other *muäaddith* about the status of a *hadith* and whether or not it is admissible as a proof on any given issue does not prejudice the opinion of the *mujtahid.*

jaz al-Masàlik, quoted the Shafi imam al-Baiçàwá (d. 685 / 1286; Shiraz):

> لم يرد به السؤال عن مكانه, فإنه منزه عنه, والرسول أعلى من أن يسأل ذلك, بل أراد أن يتعرف أنها مشركة أو موحدة لأن كفار العرب كان لكل قوم منهم صنم مخصوص يعبدونه, ولعل سفهاءهم كانوا لا يعرفون معبودا غيره, فأراد أن يعرف أنها ما تعبد, فلما قالت في السماء, وفي رواية أشارت إلى السماء, فهم منها أنها موحدة تريد بذلك نفي الأولهية الأرضية التي هي الأصنام, لا إثبات السماء مكانا له تعالى, ولأنه كان مأمورا بأن يكلم الناس على قدر عقولهم ويهديهم إلى الحق على حسب فهمهم ووجدها تعتقد أن المستحق للعبودية الذي يدبر الأمر من السماء إلى الأرض لا الآلهة التي يعبدها المشركون قنع منها بذلك ولم يكلفها اعتقاد ما هو صرف التوحيد وحقيقته.[101]

> He [the Prophetρ] did not mean to ask her about His place, for he transcends that, and the Messenger ρ is above[102] asking such a thing; rather, he meant to learn whether she was a polytheist or a unitarian. [You see] every group of the unbelieving Arabs had its own ideal which they used to worship; indeed, perhaps some of their ignorant people may not have known any other god but that; therefore, the he wanted to find out what it was that she worshipped. When she said "in the sky," or as in another version of the *hadith*, "pointed to the sky," he learned from her that she was a unitarian who meant to deny by that [that is, by either saying "in the sky," or by pointing to it] the divinity of the gods on earth, that is, the idols; she did not mean thereby to assert that Allah I occupied place. Furthermore, he was commanded to speak to the people at the level of their intelligence and to guide them to the truth according to the level of their understanding; therefore, when he found that she believed that the only one who deserved to be worshipped was He who manages things from the sky to the earth [for He sends His angels with provision or deprivation, with mercy or punishment from the sky to the earth], not the gods which the polytheists worshipped, he was satisfied with that from her and did not charge her with the pure [statement of] transcendence (*al-tauäád*) and its essence.

One should be careful not to misconceive what al-Baiçàwá has said. The slave girl did not imagine that Allah I occupied by space and al-Baiçàwá stated that explicitly. Her belief was pure, but her expression of it was not, for it was ambiguous. If anyone doubts that, they should reflect that her statement, or this version of the report of it, has bewildered a section of this *ummah* till this day and her statement has kept the *'ulamà'* busy to this day trying to explain what she meant and did not

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[101] أوجز المسالك إلى موطأ مالل لمحمد زكريا الكاندهلوي, دار الفكر, بيروت, 1410هـ/1989م, كتاب العتق ووالولاء, ج 10, ص 367.

[102] Notice that even if this phrase "the Messenger is above that" we have a metaphorical, or figurative, use of "above." Indeed the metaphor is common to many languages. To insist that it must be used literally in Arabic, the most figurative and eloquent of all languages, is sheer obstinacy and block-headedness.

mean. However, as al-Baiçàwá observes, the Prophet ρ "did not charge her with the pure transcendence and its essence," that is, the statement of it as I interpolated. What would have been the pure statement of it? Well, to have replied, for example: "He, who is unique in His being an attributes, is beyond time and space, neither is He in this world not outside of it, neither in contact with it nor separate from it." After quoting the commentary of a few more authorities on this *hadith,* we will mention some of the other reports concerning it, including one in which it is mentioned that she was a non-Arab and another in which it is mentioned that she was dumb for she could not speak. That explains all the more why the Prophet ρ would departed from the norm, which was to ask a person to say the *shahàdah,* and instead asked her, or motioned to her, as in one report, "Where is Allah"? and accepted from her in answer a motion to the sky.

Imam al-Qurtubá (d. 656 / 1258; Alexandria), a *muäaddith*, and the renowned author of the commentary on the abridgement of *Ãaäää Muslim,*[103] gave an explanation the *hadith* similar to al-Baiçàwá:

> وقوله صلى الله عليه وسلم للجارية أين الله؟ هذا تنزل مع الجارية على قدر فهمها, إذ أراد أن يظهر منها ما يدل على أنها ليست ممن يعبد الأصنام ولا الحجارة التي في الأرض, فأجاب بذلك, وكأنها قالت: إن الله ليس من جنس ما يكون في الأرض, و أين ظرف يسأل به عن المكان كما أن متى ظرف يسأل به عن الزمان, ...وهو لا يصح إطلاقه على الله تعالى بالحقيقة, إذ الله تعالى منزه عن المكان كما هو منزه عن الزمان, بل هو خالق الزمان والمكان ولم يزل موجودا ولا زمان ولا مكان وهو الآن على ما عليه كان, ولو كان قابلا للمكان لكان مختصا به, ويحتاج إلى مخصص, ولكان فيه إما متحركا وإما ساكنا, وهما أمران حادثان, وما يتصف بالحوادث حادث على ما يبسط قوله في علم الكلام, ولما صدق قوله تعالى (ليس كمثله شيء) إذ كانت تماثله الكائنات في أحكامها, والممكنات في إمكانه, وإذا ثبت ذلك ثبت أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم إنما أطلقه على الله بالتوسع والمجاز لضرورة إفهام المخاطبة القاصرة الفهم الناشئة مع قوم معبوداتهم في بيوتهم, فأراد النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أن يتعرف منها هل هي ممن يعتقد أن معبوده في بيت الأصنام, أم لا, فقال لها: أين الله؟ فقالت في السماء فقنع منها بذلك وحكم بإيمانهما إذ لم تتمكن من فهم غير ذلك, وإذ نزهت الله تعالى عن أن يكون من قبيل معبوداتهم وأصنامهم رفعته عن أن يكون في مثل أمكنتهم وحملها على ذلك أنها رأت المسلمون يرفعون أبصارهم وأيديهم إلى السماء عند الدعاء, فتُركت على ذلك في تلك الحال لقصور فهمها إلى أن يتمكن فهمها وينشر صدرها إذ لو قيل لها في تلك الحالة الله تعالى يستحيل عليه المكان والزمان لخيف عليها أن تعتقد النفي المخض والتعطيل إذ ليس كل عقل يقبل هذا ويعقله على وجهه بل إنما يعقله العالمون الذين شرح الله صدورهم لهداية ونوّر قلوبهم بنور معرفته وأمدهم بتوفيقه زمعونته [وأكثر الخلق تغلب عليهم الأوهام] وتكلّ منهم الأفهام.
> وقيل في تأويل هذا الحديث أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم إنما سألها بأين عن الرتبة المعنوية التي هي راجعة إلى جلاله تعالى وعظمته التي بها باين كل من نسبت إليه الإلهية, وهذا كما يقال أين الثريا من الثرى؟ والبصر من العمي؟ أي بعُد ما بينهما واختصت الثريا والبصر بالشرف الرفعة على هذا يكون قولها في السماء أي في غاية العلو والرفعة وهذا كما يقال فلان في السماء ومناط الثريا وهذا كما قال:

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[103] His name is Abâ'l-'Abbàs Aämad ibn 'Umar ibn Ibràhám and he is to be distinguished from his namesake, his student the famous commentator of the Qur'an Abâ 'Abd Allah al-Qurâubá, Muäammad ibn Aämad al-Anãàrá (d. 671 / 1273; Asiut).

وإنّ بني عوف كما قد علمتم مناط الثريا قد تعالت نجومها

أقول هذا والله ورسوله أعلم, والتسليم أسلم. تنبيه: ثم اعلم أنه لا خلاف بين المسلمين قاطبة محدثهم وفقيههم ومتكلمهم ومقلدهم ونظارهم أن الظواهر الواردة بذكر الله تعالى في السماء كقوله (أأمنتم من في السماء) ليست على ظاهرها وأنها متأولة عند جميعهم. أما من قال منهم بالجهة فتلك جهة عنده هي جهة الفوق التي عبّر عنها بالعرش وهو فوق السموات كما جاء في الأحاديث فلا بدَ أن يتأول كونه في السماء وقد تأولوا تأويلات وأشبه ما فيه أن في بمعى على كما قال (ولأصلبنكم في جذوع النخل) أي على جذوع النخل ويكون العلو بمعنى الغلبة وأما من يعتقد نفي الجهة في حق الله تعالى فهو أحق بإزالة ذلك الظاهر وإجلال الله تعالى عنه وأولى الفرق بالتأويل, وقد حصل من هذا الأصل المحقق أن قول الجارية في السماء ليس على ظاهره باتفاق المسلمين, فيتعين أن يعتقد فيه أنه معرض لتأويل المتأولين وأن من حمله على ظاهره ضال من الضالين.[104]

His statement ρ to the slave girl “Where is Allah”? was a way of coming down to the slave girl’s level of understanding, for he wanted to elicit from her what would show that she was not one of those who worshipped the idols or stones that were on the earth, and indeed she answered in a way that indicated that. It was as if she had said: “Allah is not of the same class as those things that are on the earth.” “Where” is a particle that is used to indicate place just as “when” is used to ask about time….The term can not rightly be used in relation to Allah I in a literal way since Allah I transcends space just as He transcends time. Indeed, He is the creator of time and space; He existed before the existence of time and space and He is now as He was then. If He were subject to place, it would qualify Him and if it qualified Him He would need none to choose for him that particular quality [for example, that He be over the Throne instead of on it, or wider than the Throne instead of smaller than it or equal to it and so on]. Furthermore, He would either have to be moving from that place or to be still in it; now both of these qualities are originated [since movement requires a cause while stillness has the potential to change into movement, and whatever has the potential to change is not eternal] and whatever is qualified by origination is itself originated [and therefore in need of an originator] as has been amply explained in the science of *kalàm.* Moreover, [if He was qualified by place] His word I “Nothing is like Him” (42:11) would not be true since created things would in fact resemble him in their predicates [what they can be qualified by] and contingent things [that is, things that are subject to different possibilities] in what is possible for them [whereas Allah is a necessary being and all His

[104] المفهم لما أشكل من تلخيص كتاب مسلم لأبي العباس القرطبي, دار ابن كثير ببيروت ودار الكلم الطيب بدمشق, الطبعة الأولى, 1417هـ/1996م, ج 2, ص 142-144.

attributes are necessary not possible as we discussed in detail previously]. If this is confirmed then it is confirmed that the Prophet ρ used those words with respect to Allah in a manner of speaking and metaphorically to communicate with a person who had limited understanding, a person who had grown up with people whose gods were in their homes. The Prophet ρ purposed to learn from her whether or not she was one of those whose god was in his house; therefore, he said to her "Where is Allah"? She answered "In the sky," and he was satisfied with that from her and he declared her belief, for that was the only way she could understand, and since [in effect] she had thereby declared that Allah was above the class of their gods and idols and above being in such places as they were in. What prompted her to do that was that she had seen the Muslims raising their eyes and their hands in supplication. She was left with that [form of declaration of belief] in those circumstances because of her limited understanding [Note: Keep in mind that neither the Prophet ρ nor the slave girl intended to imply that Allah was located in the sky as al-Quråubá will presently stress] until such time as she might be capable of understanding more than that, for were she to have been told in such a state of limited understanding that it was impossible that Allah I be located in space and time, it was to be feared that she might believe that Allah did not exist or that He was imperfect (*al-ta'åil*) since not every mind can accept this [the fact that Allah I transcends space and time and all originated and contingent attributes] and understand it as it should be understood. Indeed, only the learned whose hearts Allah has enlightened with His guidance and illuminated with the light of understanding from Him and provided them with help and ability from Him can understand that [that is, the implications of pure transcendence], and in fact most people are subject to misconceptions and their understanding is dim.

Ibn al-Jauzá also interpreted the *Hadith al-Jàriyah* in an idiomatic way. In his *Daf' Shubah al-Tashbáh* he wrote: "The *ulamà'* have realised that the sky and the earth do not contain Allah I is He; nor does space reach Him. [As for the *hadith*] the Prophet ρ understood from her sign that she revered the Creator."[105] Al-Quråub Ibn Äajr al-'Asqalàná **(REFERENCE)**, Abâ Bakr Ibn al'Arabá, **(REFERENCE)** and 'Alàmah Muäammad Zàhid al-Kauthará and others pointed out that the question "where" in Arabic can refer to place in the sense of position, rank or prestige (*makànah* / مكانة) as it can refer to physical place (*makàn* / مكان). [NB: This may be out of place if the matter has been discussed

[105] Daf' Shubah al-Tashbáh, p. 43

in the previous quotes. Go over them and see how far it has been discussed. You may want to mention them all them remind and summarize here.] They mentioned that the Arabs say "the place of so and so is in the sky" meaning that he has great esteem. He [NB: who quoted it?] quoted a verse of the master poet, the Companion Nàbighah al-Ja'dá[106] in attestation to that usage: "We, our glory, and our fortune rose to the sky, but we desire a height [belvedere] (*manæar*) above even that."[107]

Keep in mind that one of the important ways in which the *'ulamà'* determined the precise meanings of the Arabic words and idioms used in the Qur'àn and the *sunnah* was through the evidence of ancient Arabic poetry. The Followers used to ask the Scholar of the Arabs (*äibr al-'arab*)[108], Ibn 'Abbàs, the nephew of the Prophetρ, about the meaning of words and idioms in the Qur'àn. When he would answer, they would ask him for some proof of what he claimed, and he would recite some verses of ancient poetry in testimony. In fact, he taught the Followers to seek the meanings of the words of revelation in the legacy of poetry, which was alive in the collective memory of the Arabs. Jalàl al-Dán al-Suyâtá (d. 911 / 1505; Cairo) devoted a whole chapter in his *al-Itqàn fá 'Ulâm al-Qur'àn*, a textbook on the sciences of the Qur'an, to the importance of ancient poetry as a means to verify the meanings of obscure phrases (*al-gharà'ib*) in the

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[106] Nàbighah al-Ja'dá (d. about 50 / 670; Isfahan) τ attained fame prior to Islam on account of his exquisite poetry. He did not use to recite poetry; then suddenly when he was about thirty years old, he started to gush forth extemporaneously, poetry of exquisite beauty–that is why he was called *Nàbighah,* the root of which means *to emerge from obscurity as a poet*. He lived to be over one hundred years old, and fought the Battle of Siffán with the Caliph 'Alá τ. Prior to accepting Islam, he used to shun idols and prohibit wine. When he came with a deputation of his tribe to visit the Prophet ρ, he accepted Islam, and recited for him some poetry including the above-mentioned verse in which he said: "…but we desire a height above even that." When he recited it the Prophet ρ asked him: "Where will you go?" He replied: "Paradise." The Prophet ρ affirmed: "Yes, [you shall have paradise] if Allah wills." Ibn Äajr al-'Asqalàná reported it as a *hadith* with its chain of narration (*sanad*) in his *al-Maåàlib al-'Àliyah,* (Cairo, Mu'assasah Qurâubah, 1st ed., 1418), p. 322; vol. 9.

[107] The original verse is: *'Alunà al-samà'a majdunà wa judâdunà; wa innà lanab'ghá fauqa dhàlika maæharà /* علونا السماء مجدنا وجدودنا / وإنا لنبغي فوق ذلك منظرا. There are two acceptable ways to construe the first hemistich according to the rules of analytical grammar (*al-i'ràb /* الإعراب). If *sky* (*al-samà'*) is taken to be the object of the verb *rose* (*'alaunà*) making the verb transitive, then glory is in apposition (*badl*) to the subject of the verb *rose*; namely, the pronoun *we.* Thus it can be translated literally: " We, our glory, and fortune rose to the sky." However, if we take *sky* to be the subject (*mubtada'*) of a new sentence, then *rose* would be taken to be intransitive, and the verse may be translated: "We rose; the sky is our glory and fortune."

[108] The Prophet ρ conferred this title on him and he also prayed that Allah should give him the understanding of religion and the knowledge of the interpretation (*ta'wál*) [of the Qur'an]. In another report he prayed: "O Allah, teach him wisdom, and the interpretation (*ta'wál*) of the Book." Several similar reports were mentioned by Ibn Äajr al-'Asqalàná in his *al-Iãàbah fá Tamyáz al-Ãaääàbah,* which an encyclopedia of the biographies of all persons who are known to be Companions. See Ibn Äajr al-'Asqalàná, *al-Iãàbah fá Tamyáz al-Ãaääàbah* (Beirut, Dàr al-Jál, 1st ed., 1412), pp. 133-134.

Qur'an. He quoted Abâ Bakr ibn al-Anbàrá (328 / 940; Baghdad)[109] as saying that much has been reported from the Companions and the Followers concerning their establishing the meanings of the difficult and obscure phrases of the Qur'an through the evidence of poetry. He quoted Ibn 'Abbàs: "Poetry is the archives (*dáwàn*) of the Arabs, so if some word in the Qur'an, which Allah Ψ revealed in the language of the Arabs, is unknown to us, we should have recourse to those archives, and seek its meaning there."[110]

Notice that that we have quoted a wide spectrum of authorities from the Hanafi, Shafi, Maliki, and Hanafi *madhhabs,* all of whom were also renown *muäaddithân* in addition to being exalted authorities of the *sharà'ah* and celebrated authors of works which the *'ulamà'* and the common people have poured over for centuries. They all agree that it is not permissible to adopt the literal, outward meaning of the ambiguous texts if the literal meaning prejudices the transcendence of Allah Ψ, or prejudices what is established conclusively by definitive verses of the Qur'an or the definitive (*mutawàtir*) *sunnah*. Keep in mind that what they have expressed are no maverick ideas; rather, they are quite representative of the opinion of the vast majority of qualified *'ulamà'* of their *madhhab.* You have seen that they all insisted that there was agreement on this matter. No doubt the pseudo-Salafis who represent the *mushabbihah* of our day, insist that the main community insist that we have to take the *mutashàbihah* literally and understand them in a physical way. They will site Ibn Taiáyah and Ibn al-Qayyim and a handful of other misfits and misquote the *'ulamà'* of Ahlu 'l-*sunnah*, as we saw them misquote Abâ Äanáfah. Now let every prudent soul ask himself whether wisdom lies in following the dictates of reason which call us to maintain at all expense the inalienable principle of *tauhid* and follow the vast majority of great authorities, or to ignore that illustrious unanimity and follow a handful of men who were, to put it politely, figures of controversy.

(NB: CROSS-REFERENCE NEEDED. IN THIS VERSION OF YOUR ARTICLE YOU HAVE NOT DISCUSSED WHO THE ASHARITES ARE, SO EITHER YOU HAVE TO DISCUSS THEM NOW OR DISCUSS THEM IN AN APPROPRIATE SECTION SOMEWHERE ABOVE) Recall that Tàj al-Dán al-Subká confirmed what is not any secret to the *ulamà'*; namely, that the followers of these three *madhhabs* are all *Ash'aráyah* (or *Ashà'irah*; that is, Asharites) with few excep-

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[109] Khair al-Dán al-Ziriklá mentioned in his *al-A'làm* (p. 334; vol. 6) said that Abâ Bakr ibn al-Anbàrá was the most knowledgeable person of his time in the field of literature and language. He said that some say he memorised three hundred thousand verses of poetry that testify to the meanings of the words and idioms of the Qur'àn. He wrote a book on the obscure words in *hadith* that contains forty-five thousand pages.

[110] Al-Suyâtá, *al-Itqàn fá 'Ulâm al-Qur'àn*, (Beirut, 'Àlam al-Kutub, n.d.) p. 119; vol. 1

tions, and that the early, and great men of the Hanbali *madhhab* are also *Ash'aráyah.*[111]

(NB: GIVE A NUMBER OF EXAMPLES DEMONSTRATING THE CLEAR-CUT TAJSIM OF IBN TAIMIYAH AND ALSO SOME OTHER EXAMPLES OF HIS DEVIATION)

[111] See above page ??